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"I leaped high in the air."

p. 61.

THE KING'S ASSEGAI

A Matabili Story

BY

BERTRAM MITFORD

AUTHOR OF 'THE GUN-RUNNER,' 'THE LUCK OF GERARD RIDGELEY,' ''TWEEN SNOW AND FIRE,' ETC.

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS BY STANLEY L. WOOD

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To

COLONEL JAMES HENRY BOWKER,

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Sometime Commandant of the Cape Frontier Armed and Mounted Police, and Governor's Agent for Basutoland,

WHOSE WIDE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE CHARACTER

AND WHOSE SYMPATHY WITH ALL THAT IS BEST IN IT

ARE SURPASSED BY NONE,

I INSCRIBE THIS ROMANCE OF AN HISTORICAL EPISODE,

WITH MANY GRATEFUL RECOLLECTIONS.

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THE KING'S ASSEGAI

PROLOGUE.

'You were astonished when I refused your piece of gold, *Nkose*.* But were you to offer me your waggon loaded up with just such shining gold pieces, even that would not coax this broad spear out of my possession.'

'I should be sorry to make the offer, Untúswa, for I fear that, whatever its merit, I should be the owner of a weapon for which I had paid too long a price.'

But the old Zulu only shook his head, contemptuously, it seemed, and the faint, satirical

* Lit. 'chief'—a title of civility which the innate courtesy of the Zulu moves him to bestow upon the stranger. In this connection it corresponds to 'sir.'

smile which turned down the corners of his mouth seemed to say, 'This poor fool! Does he know what he is talking about?'

'Let me look at it again, Untúswa,' I said, reaching out for the weapon for which a few minutes before I had ended by offering a golden sovereign — having begun with a few worthless items of truck, such as beads, pocket-knives, etc. It was a splendid assegai of the short-handled, close-quarter type. The blade, double-edged, keen and shining, was three fingers broad and at least twenty inches in length, and was secured in its socket by raw-hide bindings, firm as iron, and most neatly and tastefully plaited. The haft, expanding at the butt into a truncated knob, was of a curious dark wood, something like ebony, almost black, and highly polished.

'*Au!* You are a good man, *Nkose*. You will not do anything to it?' was the somewhat reluctant reply, as the weapon was handed over.

'Bewitch it, I suppose you mean, Untúswa? Have no fear. There is no *tagati* about me—not a grain.'

Handling this splendid specimen of an assegai, poising it, noting its perfect and graceful make, its strength and temper, I was inclined to quadruple my original offer, but that I felt confident that the old man was in dead earnest as to his statement that untold gold would not induce him to part with this weapon. But here, I thought, is the direct antithesis of the Needy Knife-Grinder. This man *has* a story to tell, if only he can be induced to tell it.

The hour was propitious—the still, deliciously lazy time of the mid-day outspan. From our position on the Entonjaneni heights we commanded a fair expanse of the crag-crowned hills and rolling plains of Central Zululand. Beneath lay the wide bush-clad valley of the White Umfolosi—the river winding in a snaky band. Beyond, the Mahlabatini Plain—now silent and deserted—and there six great wizard-circles in the grass alone showed where had stood, a year or so back, just that number of huge kraals, the principal of which was Ulundi.

The unwilling dealer in prize assegais was a tall,

thin old man, whose age it would have been impossible to guess were it not that by his own showing he must have been at least as old as the century—which would have given him fourscore. Though lean and shrunken, he showed evidences of the former possession of great muscular power, and even now was as straight as a telegraph-pole, and carried his ringed head slightly thrown back, as became a man who was somebody. He had come to the waggon, in company with other Zulus, to exchange civilities according to custom, but had lingered on after the departure of the rest. Then I fed him, and gave him much snuff, and strove to tempt him to sell the weapon which had taken my fancy.

'It is a fine spear,' I said, returning it to its owner; 'but there are many such in Zululand, and of gold pieces there are not many. Why do you value it so?'

'*Au!* Value it?' Then, with a glance at my native boys who were snoring under the waggon, he said, in a lowered voice, and stretching forth his hand in emphasis:

'It was the spear of the King.'

'Of the King? Of Cetywayo?'

'*Qa-bo!* Not so!' he answered with a shake of the head. Then, after a few moments spent in snuff-taking and silence, he went on:

'Listen, *Nkose;* I have fought for another king than him whom you English have taken from us, and for whom our hearts are crying. Though in my old age I fought for Cetywayo as an ordinary warrior, yet I was, while yet young, a great *induna* at the right hand of another king, and the second in command of his armies. For my youth, and, indeed, most of my life, was passed among a kindred people who dwell to the north. I am from the Amandebili.'*

* Commonly known as Matabili.

CHAPTER I.

TSHAKA'S IMPI.

Now I saw I was going to get at a wonderful story. The incidents and recollections which would cluster round that beautifully-made dark-handled spear could not fail to be copious as well as passing strange. Then, in his pleasant and flowing Zulu voice—*the* voice *par excellence* for narrative purposes—the old man began:

'I am Untúswa, the son of Ntelani, a Zulu of the tribe of Umtetwa. I was a boy in the days when Tshaka,* the great King, ruled this land, and

* The name of the celebrated Zulu King should, in strict accuracy, be written Tyaka. The above spelling, however, has been adopted throughout this narrative in consideration for the British ear. To spell the name with a C is quite erroneous.

trampled his enemies flatter than the elephant tramples the grass-blades. But I was full of the fighting blood which has made our people what they are—what they were, rather'—he parenthesized sadly, recollecting that we were looking down upon the relics of fallen greatness, as represented by the silent desolation of the razed capital—'ah, yes! But instead of fighting for Tshaka I fought under a very different sort of king.

'When there are two bulls of nearly equal size in one kraal, they will not look long at each other before locking their horns. There were two such bulls in those days in the land of Zulu, and they were Tshaka, the son of Senzangakona, who was the King, and Umzilikazi,* the son of Matyobane. I was but a boy, I repeat, in those days, but they tell me that Umzilikazi loved not the house of Senzangakona. But he was wiser than the serpent if braver than the bull-buffalo in full charge. He thought it better to be a live king than a dead *induna*.

* More commonly, but quite erroneously, known as Mosilekatse.

'It befell that he dropped out of favour with the great King; for being, though young, one of the first fighting chiefs among the Amazulu, he soon gathered to himself an immense following. To him, too, came my father, Ntelani, and many others who loved not the House which had deposed the tribe of Umtetwa, the royal House of Dingiswayo, which was our own. Then Tshaka grew jealous, as he ever did when he saw one of his chiefs increase in power and influence. He sent Umzilikazi upon war expeditions, in the hope of procuring his death, and when this failed, and our chief returned covered with greater glory than ever, the King tried another plan. He declared we had hidden the best of the spoil, had sent the best of the cattle and captives away into the mountains, and an *impi* was ordered out, to take us unawares and destroy us.

'But not thus were we to be taken. Such a move had been expected, and for some time previously Umzilikazi had been sending men to explore the passes of the mountains—the great Kwahlamba range—which shut us in behind as with great rocky walls; hither, too, our cattle and women

were sent. The while our chief had been talking to the heads of the different clans which made up his following, and his talking had fallen upon ready ears. There were fair lands away beyond the mountains—lands of waving grass and flowing streams and countless herds of game, lands where dwelt tribes whose only destiny was to serve the all-powerful Amazulu. They had only to cross the mountains and conquer those lands.

'The old men took snuff and listened, and saw that the words were wise. To remain was certain death; to fly would mean possible safety and wealth. The young men listened and gripped their weapons. The prospect of conquering out a new kingdom, of the enemies we should meet and slay—this it was that fired our blood. Besides, we would have gone through flame at the bidding of our chief, who had led us so often to victory. Moreover, it was darkly whispered that the iron yoke of Tshaka, in the matter of earlier marriage being permitted, and such-like, would be relaxed. So day by day, in batches, our women and cattle were moved higher and higher up the mountain-

passes, preparing for flight; and we lay under arms, and ready to give our destroyers a great deal of trouble when they should arrive. And in order that we should be found thoroughly prepared, some of us younger men, fleet of foot and strong of vision, were posted upon the lower heights of the Kwahlamba, whence we could see for an enormous distance. At last the day came.

'The sun had just risen, and was flooding the land with gold. It was a clear morning, and entirely free from mist; and, seated there on my lofty watch-pinnacle, I beheld a movement far away towards the rising sun. I sprang to my feet and gazed eagerly forth. A curtain of cloud was rising over the land—spreading higher and higher, rolling nearer and nearer with great rapidity. Cloud? No. It was a curtain of dust.

'So immense was the space spread out beneath me that it seemed as though I could see over the whole world. On swept this great dust-cloud, still at an enormous distance, but nearing rapidly every moment. And then I knew what caused it. That dust-cloud was stirred up by countless herds of

game fleeing in panic and terror. Then I called to my brother, who sprang upon the rock beside me.

'"Look, Sekweni! Yonder the game is in full flight. Yonder are the Zulu spears. The King's *impi* is coming!"

'We stood for a little while longer, watching the dust-cloud till we could see among it rolling, tumbling forms.

'"Go now, Sekweni, and cry aloud the news from post to post," I said. "I go to warn Umzilikazi, our father."

'And as I sprang down the mountain-side, leaping from stone to stone, from crag to crag, with the surefootedness and fleetness of a buck, long before I reached the level I could see the flash and glitter of sparks of flame through the towering dust-cloud, extending in a great line over the plain. It was the glitter of innumerable spears. The host advancing behind those flying game herds—advancing to destroy us—was as the whole of Tshaka's army.

'How I ran! There was none who could run

against me in those days, *Nkose*. With head down, and panting for breath, yet far from being exhausted, I rushed into the presence of Umzilikazi.

'"Greeting, father!" I cried. "They are at hand!"

'"Ha!" And the battle-light we who had followed him knew so well came into the face of our chief.

'"How many regiments do they number, son of Ntelani?" he said, taking snuff.

'"I know not, O my father. But it seems to me that half* of the army of the Great King is advancing upon us."

'"And we number but half that. Well, Untúswa, get you back to your watching-place with six others being young and swiftfooted, and send them as messengers as there shall be aught to report. Go now!"

'I saluted the chief and bounded away like a buck. But when I had regained the mountain height with the youths whom I had chosen as

* This would mean about 20,000 men.

runners, lo! the army of Tshaka spread out black on all hands, covering the ground as it were a swarm of young locusts—sweeping on now in a huge half-circle as it were of the black waves of the sea.

'But our leader had mustered his fighting strength, and was rapidly moving up to the place he had fixed upon as his battle-ground. This was to be the entrance of the pass by which our flight should continue, for there, the lay of the ground being high and steep, a few determined fighters could repel the attacks of many; and besides this, another species of defence had been organized by the strategy and forethought of our chief.

'I saw the huge *impi* surround and burst upon our principal kraals, and I laughed aloud, for in them none remained save the very old. These were put to the assegai in a moment, and then our intending destroyers held on their way to where our warriors awaited them, on the steep sides of the pass I have described, concealed by thick bush. But they could not believe that we

meant fighting. All they had to do was to overtake us and slaughter us as we fled. How mistaken they were—ah, yes, how mistaken!

'For as the foremost of their host streamed carelessly forward, not waiting for its supports, our chief gave the word, and immediately from the bush which flanked the way on either side there poured two large bodies of our younger and most fiery warriors, to the number of about two thousand. The advance guard of the King's *impi*, taken thus by surprise and also in flank, was thrown into utter confusion. But ah! while it lasted, it was as though two seas had met—the shock and the surging, the crash of shields and the splintering of spears, the roars and the hissing of the war-whistles! Ha! they fought—ah, yes, they fought; but we rolled them back, crushed and scattered, upon the main body, and before it could charge forward we were in position again, this time higher up the pass. But the ground was covered with the dead.

'"My children are young lions indeed! The first blow struck for a new kingdom is a hard one."

Such was the word which our chief caused to be passed round for our encouragement.

'Still the King's *impi* could not understand that we intended seriously to give battle; and, indeed, as we gazed forth upon this immense sea of tossing spears and tufted shields rolling up towards us, it was little to be wondered at. For we were as a mouthful to it. Yet every man of us was fighting for his life, and under such circumstances the meanest of animals will show bravery. But yet we were fighting for something more—for freedom, for the pride of setting up a new nation.

'On they came, those waves of a living sea, and the earth shook beneath the rumble of their tread; the air rustled with the hissing of their plumes. And as they advanced they raised the great battle-song of Tshaka, its echoes tossing like thunder from cliff to cliff:

'"Waqeda—qeda izizwe!
Uyauhlasela pi-na?"*

'Above was the narrow opening of the pass, and

* 'Thou hast made an end—made an end of the nations. Whither now wilt thou maraud?'

between, for a little distance, a well-nigh open space. Here we met them hand to hand; here we held them back, while those behind pressed them onward by sheer force of weight. Foot by foot we met them, forced slowly back, but ever with our faces toward them. The ground was wet with blood, alive with falling, writhing bodies. The heights rang back our screams of rage, our defiant war-cries, and the clangour of our blows. Foot by foot we gave way; but they never got above us, never got around us. Thus shone forth the generalship of our chief in choosing this for our fighting-ground.

'Above us the pass narrowed to a steep rock-gateway overhung by lofty slopes. Suddenly, at the signal of a loud, sharp whistle, our men ceased the fight as though slain, and, turning, sprang into retreat, pouring through this great natural door. With a roar the king's *impi* dashed forward in pursuit, then paused in obedience to the mandate of its leaders, who suspected a snare.

'But only for a moment did it thus halt. The mighty mass of our would-be destroyers surged up

the pass and began to stream through the narrow defile. On they came, shouting ever the battle-cry; and then—*Whau, Nkose!* you should have seen what happened! It was as though the mountains were falling in upon us. For from either side great masses of rock came crashing down the slopes—enormous blocks of stone—some splitting into fragments as they bounded and rolled, others crashing, in their stupendous size, upon the warriors of Tshaka. These in dismay tried to draw back, but could not, for the weight of those behind pressed them on; failing in this, they bounded forward, and our assegais were there to receive them, while all the time the rolling rocks were crashing down upon their rear, filling up the entire mouth of the gap. We had shut back the army of Tshaka as it were by a gate. The great pile of rocks which filled the gap was far too high for men to leap over, too loose to be pulled down, lest the entire mass should fall upon and crush them. Such was the strategy of our chief.

'And now upon those of our enemies who were thus walled in with us there bore down the whole

of our force, led by Umzilikazi in person. Those of us who were in flight turned, re-formed, and sprang like lightning to the charge; while others of us, who had been lying concealed, leaped from our ambush, and, forming a dense half-circle, we rushed upon the warriors of Tshaka. These were about two thousand, we being four times their number. But, encouraged by the roars of their brethren on the other side, they stood their ground. *Whau!* it was like a contest of lions! When we whirled down upon them they met us in full shock; about them there was no giving way. But by the time a man might have counted a hundred, nigh half their number had fallen; but we, too, had lost fearfully. In the same time again there would not have been one left, when Umzilikazi, waving his great shield, cried, in tones of thunder, to give them a truce.

'"Yield, Gungana!" he cried to the *induna* in command. "Yield, men of Tshaka! To fight on is death; to return to the king is death. We go to find a new kingdom. Join us—for it is better to live than to die."

'"Thou sayest truly, son of Matyobane," replied

Gungana, after a moment of hesitation. Many, too, were there in that body who in their hearts favoured Umzilikazi, and were tired of the hard rule of Tshaka. If they went back to the King with their task unperformed, or badly performed, certain death awaited, and from the stout resistance we had made they deemed our force to be greater than it was. So the warriors agreed to accept their lives and come under our chief.

'This settled, we resumed our flight. And with this new accession to our fighting strength, we moved up the pass, singing back at those who would have followed, in derision, the war-song of Tshaka, but altered to, "We go to find new nations to conquer." Then it grew dark, but still we pressed on to where our women and cattle were awaiting us higher up, and, marching through the night, the next morning we gained the other side of the mountains.

'Then it was as the word of our chief had promised us. Fair and rolling plains lay beneath us, stretching as far as the eye could behold, dotted with kraals and cattle, and away in the dis-

tance coursed herds of game—elands and spring-boks and gnus and many other kinds. Then our eyes and our hearts were glad, and great and mighty was the acclamation with which we greeted him who had thus led us forth, and with one voice we all cried the royal "Bayéte!" A new nation hailed Umzilikazi as King.

CHAPTER II.

THE KING'S PROMISE.

'We saw no more of Tshaka's *impi*. Perhaps it was that a great cloud came upon the mountains after our passage and rested there for days, and they attempted to follow, and failed because of the darkness and the mist, or refrained from following at all. Anyhow, this cloud came, as I have said, and all men hailed it as a good omen and that Umzilikazi's *múti** had caused it to gather thus, in order that we might evade further pursuit.

'But as we swept down upon this new land like a swarm of devastating locusts—ah, the terror of its people! The report was cried from kraal to kraal that the great Zulu sea had overflowed the

* Medicine, mystery, magic. In this sense, the latter.

mountains, and was sweeping on to engulf all within the black fury of its wrath. Wherefore soon we found nothing but empty kraals, whose people had fled, but we took their cattle and their grain, and laughed and went on. Then, as our march progressed further and further, we began to find kraals which were not empty, and whose people had neglected to remove out of our destroying path. *Au!* it was something to see the faces of these as we sprang upon them with our fierce, roaring war-shout, which was as the thunders of heaven. Their faces were those of men already dead, and dead they soon were, for our spears devoured them as they stood, or as they lay, screaming for mercy. But mercy was no part of our plan in those days —not that Umzilikazi loved bloodshed for its own sake, or was wantonly cruel, as some of the white men say, but it was necessary to stamp out all the people in our path, to leave none behind who should say to Tshaka's *impis* pursuing us: "This way has Umzilikazi gone." So a broad trail of fire and blood marked our course, which, indeed, a man might trace by watching the clouds of vultures

aloft in the heavens. But time went on, and we moved further and further from Zululand, and still no pursuit.

'Now, of all this killing I and many others of the younger warriors soon grew tired. It was too much like cattle-slaying, falling upon these unresisting people, who had no fight in them. What we desired was to meet an enemy in arms, and some, fired with all this blood-shedding, even whispered of turning back to meet the *impis* of Tshaka in fair fight. However, when we came near the country of the Basutu we got fighting enough, for these people were brave, and though they would not meet us in the open, would retire to their cliff dwellings and hill forts and resist us fiercely, studding the approaches to their strongholds with assegai points to cut our feet and legs to pieces as we drew near, or rolling down showers of rocks upon us, so that we must flee or be crushed. This sort of fighting was not to our tastes, and we would taunt them and call them cowards for skulking behind rocks instead of coming forth to meet us in the open, man to man; and yet they were not cowards, for

every race has its own method of fighting—besides, had not we ourselves adopted that very plan?—and the Basutu were brave enough in their own way.

'At that time I had found great favour with the King, who had created my father, Ntelani, one of his *indunas*. Boy as I was, I was tall and straight and active, and afraid of nothing. I could outstrip the fastest runner among us, and, indeed, all the younger ones were ordered to compete in foot-racing, both short and long distances. I was first in all these, and the King appointed me his chief messenger. I was incorporated into his body-guard, and was never far from the King's person. Indeed, he would often talk with me alone, as though I were his son; and being young and unthinking in those days, I soon began to fancy myself a much bigger man than my own father. So one day I went boldly to the King, and asked leave to *tunga*,* for by this time we had many women-captives among us, over and above those we had been able to bring with us from Zululand.

'Umzilikazi burst out laughing.

* Lit. 'sew' the head-ring; *i.e.*, to marry.

'"What!" he said. "You, a boy—a mere child yesterday—thinking to *tunga?* Go, go! You are fleet of foot, Untúswa, but I have never heard that you had done anything especially brave—braver than your fellows, that is. What claim, then, have you to sue for the privilege which is granted to tried warriors alone?"

'"Give me but the chance, O King; give me but the chance!" I cried. "I will surpass everyone for valour, for I know not what fear is."

'Umzilikazi had abandoned his good-humoured laugh. He now looked grave, even severe. In truth, I knew I was doing a bold thing in daring so much as to reply upon "the word" of the King. It was an act which might have cost many a man his life. Yet there I stood, about ten paces from him, in a slightly bent attitude of humility, but meeting his gaze full and fearlessly.

'"Do you presume upon the favour I have ever shown you, Untúswa?" he said sternly. "Do you perchance forget that the slayers are ever within hail?"

'"I lie beneath the foot of the King—the Great

Elephant whose tread shaketh the world," I replied, launching into the most extravagant of *bonga*,* but still meeting his threatening gaze unquailingly.

'"I believe you speak truly, boy, and that you do not know fear," he answered, "else you had not dared to stand before me thus. Well now, this is my "word": Go and distinguish yourself; perform some act bolder than any I have ever heard tell of. Then, child as you are, you shall wear the head-ring—because are you not, after all, my chief runner?"

'"Who am I, to keep on filling the King's ears with words?" I said. "But give me the chance to distinguish myself. Give me the chance, Father!"

'"You must make the chance, Untúswa; you must make it for yourself. But I say again, because you are my chief runner and my faithful servant, I will do more for you than I would for many, O son of Ntelani. Perform some act bolder than any act I have ever heard tell of, and you

* Acclamatory praise, as applied to the King.

shall be allowed to *tunga*. Not only that, but I will give you this *umkonto** which I hold in my hand, and with it you shall lead my armies to battle. Now go."

'I bent low to the earth, then straightened myself up, and with hand uplifted shouted:

'"*Bayéte!* I walk on air, O Elephant! for have I not the King's promise?" Then I went out from the presence.

'You must know, *Nkose*, that in those days Umzilikazi was in the prime of his youth and strength, being tall and active, and with the stamp of a chief among chiefs. His countenance was noble and stately as that of a lion, and in his unbending moments he had a way with him that bound us to him in such wise that we, his younger warriors, would have died all deaths at his word. For his rule was lighter than that of Tshaka. He, like Tshaka, knew not fear, and was as daring and skilful a leader as the great Zulu King; indeed, this it was that aroused the jealousy of Tshaka, as I have told you, and led to the building up of a

* The broad-bladed, short-handled assegai.

new nation. And although, for necessity's sake, as regards other tribes, Umzilikazi was ruthless and unsparing, among us, his followers, he was merciful, if strict, and rarely spilt blood. Yet, while we loved him, we feared him—oh yes, we feared him.

'Now, although I had the King's promise, I felt sorely perplexed; for how was I to fulfil its conditions? For days and nights I thought and dreamed of nought else; saying nothing, however, to my father, Ntelani, who was already jealous of the great favour Umzilikazi had shown me, and might have devised some means of thwarting me.

'It happened that on the evening after I had obtained the King's promise I was returning alone from a hunt. I was empty-handed; for although my fleetness of foot enabled me to traverse long distances, yet game was scarce in our neighbourhood, owing to the passage of such an immense body of people, which had scared it. Tired and dispirited, I threw down my assegais and small shield, and sank down against a rock to rest. Suddenly my tawny, black-muzzled hound leaped

up and dashed round the rock with a growl. But this was soon changed to a whine of pleasure. Clearly the intruder was known to him. Raising my eyes, I beheld a girl.

'I am an old man now, *Nkose*, and have lived to learn that women, like assegais, are all made very much on the same lines—like assegais, are keen and sharp to cut and destroy. But, old man as I am, I cannot even now quite forget that evening after I had talked with the King.

'"Of what are your thoughts that they are so heavy, O son of Ntelani?' she said, with a mischievous sparkle in her eyes.

'I gazed upon her for a moment without replying; for I knew who she was, though we had never before spoken. Picture to yourself, *Nkose*, a tall fine girl—indeed, nearly as tall as myself—as straight as a spear-shaft and as strong and firm as a yellow-wood tree, with large and rounded limbs, and a face all sparkling with intelligence and mirth. She was rather light-coloured, though, and we Zulus, *Nkose*, prefer our women very black.

'"Perhaps it was of you I was thinking, Nangeza," I answered. "Is not that enough to produce heavy thoughts?"

"'*Yau!*" she cried. "It may be that there are those who think the reverse. *They* do not feel heavy when their thoughts are of me."

'"But they are *amakehla.** Any one of them has only to send in enough cattle and you are his. Now look at me. I am young. It may be half a lifetime before the King allows me to *tunga*. Wherefore, when I think of you I feel heavy, Nangeza, for this is not the first time I have looked upon you."

'"I know that, son of Ntelani," she answered, looking shy. Then all of a sudden she came and sat down beside me. "Listen, Untúswa," she said, throwing an arm round my neck. "You are but an *umfane*, but I have loved you for some time unknown to you, for you are so strong and brave. And are you not the King's chief runner? Now, put your ear to my lips while I whisper. Well, then, it is breathed among the old men that

* Head-ringed men, and privileged to marry.

Umzilikazi intends to relax the severe laws of the Great Great One whose land we have left,* and to allow his warriors to *tunga* while young—when we gain the land wherein we are to dwell. Now, Untúswa, if any man can win this privilege, it is yourself, for you are as brave as any, and, for the rest, you are the King's chief runner, and have very much the ear of the King."

'This struck me as a good omen, coming as it did so close upon the King's promise. I looked upon Nangeza's splendid form, for, of course, she wore nothing but the girl's *mútya*, or little apron of beads, and thought that to make her mine but for a little while, I would pay the sure and certain penalty—viz., death; but then the penalty would be suffered by her, too. Should I tell her of the King's promise? Wisdom said "No"; but then my brain was reeling with love for her, and my evil spirit whispered that a woman's brain and wit are subtle, and might devise a plan where I failed to see one. So I told her of the King's promise; and having done so, my good spirit cried out upon

* Tshaka.

me for a fool, for a secret which is shared by a woman—might it not as well be cried aloud from kraal to kraal from sunrise to sunset?

'My news, however, caused Nangeza to clap her hands delightedly.

'"You are indeed a man, Untúswa!" she cried. "Keep well within the favour of the King. One day you will be an *induna*. Who knows? One day you may command the whole army in battle."

'"Why not propose that one day I may reign as King?" I said banteringly. "The one is as likely as the other."

'"Well, what then? Even that may be," was her cool reply. "A man who is brave and cautious may climb to any height; and did not the King promise you his dark-handled assegai? What is the history of Umzilikazi himself?"

'"Speak low, girl, or speak not of these things at all," I whispered warningly. "One word of such talk falling upon other ears would certainly cost both of us our lives."

'But, in truth, I was amazed, bewildered, the

while more in love with her than ever, on account of this bold and scheming talk.

'"What, then?" she answered. "The King may have us killed, but he cannot prevent us from loving each other. Come now, Untúswa, and let us love each other while we may."

'*Au, Nkose,* who shall put gray hair upon—a cool brain into—a young head? The place was lonely, and my good dog would keep watch. And so Nangeza and I loved each other, and not until darkness had fallen did we separate from each other's arms and wend by different ways back to the camp.

'But we had both incurred the death penalty. For the stern and rigorous law of Tshaka had as yet undergone no relaxation, and even Umzilikazi himself would hardly have dared to pardon a breach thereof. Yet, such is the hot-blooded rashness of youth, this, though the first, was destined to be by no means the last time we should incur that awful penalty.

CHAPTER III.

THE BASUTU KRAALS.

'SHORTLY after this an *impi* was sent out against some strong Basutu kraals which lay in our path, and whose inhabitants, our scouts had reported, were arming for resistance. Little they knew that they had to contend against a whole nation. They imagined, doubtless, that they only had to deal with a small *impi* of Tshaka's which had crossed the Kwahlamba range.

'"Go now, Untúswa," said the King. "Here, it may be, you may win your head-ring."

'And this, *Nkose*, was in my mind. So we set forth, about fifteen hundred strong, for the King would not send too large a force, in ordêr to keep us in practice for real hand-to-hand fighting on

something like even terms. Masipele was our head *induna*, and under him was Gungana, a man of whom I was not over-fond, nor did he like me, whom he deemed was ever too near the ear of the King.

'We started at dawn, and after marching about a quarter of a day, came in sight of the Basutu kraals, standing upon an open plain, beneath a low, round-topped range of hills. There were three of these kraals, but it was in the largest that all the fighting men had gathered. This was surrounded by a very high and very broad stockade, composed of dry thorn boughs beaten together and interlaced. We made no attempt at concealment, but advanced singing our great battle-song of victory or death. Then Masipele gave orders to form in crescent formation, and to charge forward to surround the kraal.

'*Whau!* that day! The Basutu did not run away when they spied our approach. They were ready for us, and, clustering as thick as bees, they fought behind their stockade with all the valour we could wish. Roaring like lions, we sprang again to the charge, only to be met by their ready spears

and battle-axes on the other side of the stockade, and before we could leap over and return stab for stab we were hurled back blinded by great prickly boughs thrust into our faces. They were nearly as numerous as ourselves, and fought as desperately. Twice we were repulsed, and that, to us Zulus, represents more than half a defeat. Our head *induna* was killed, falling upon a heap of corpses, the bodies of those he was leading. One horn of the *impi* was wavering on the verge of rout. Here was my chance; for I had formed a plan.

'"Follow me, soldiers of the King!" I cried. "I will find a road in!"

'Measuring the distance with my eyes, I ran and leaped. I could leap in those days as well as run. My leap carried me clear over the stockade, right into the thick of the swarming Basutu. But I was alone. None had followed.

'Then I saw red. How I cut and slashed with the strong, broad-bladed assegai in my hand! Grinning, furious faces hemmed me in; a bright forest of blades struck and hacked at me from every side. I could feel the burning sear of wounds,

"My leap carried me clear over the stockade."

the stunning shock of knob-kerries on my great war-shield. I could feel more—I could feel blood, that of my enemies; I could feel the keen blade of my assegai shearing through them, as they fell one upon another. Ah, the madness of it! The ecstasy of it! What a glorious form of death was this! I, alone, beset by foes—felling them around me like trees! I, alone, where none had dared follow! Ha! surely no braver deed was ever done! The King would be satisfied now! Dancing, leaping, thrusting, parrying, I hewed my way through the encompassing crowd, further and further into the kraal, further and further to death. But for death I cared nothing now, and I laughed aloud. My furious war-shout was answered by my comrades outside. Ah, but—they were still outside!

'Now my end would be gained. A curl of blue smoke arose from above the lines of huts, and towards this I was making, surely, craftily, cunningly. I had left off fighting now, and was dodging my enemies round and among the huts. Ha! they could not overtake me, for had they not to do with the King's chief runner?—and there were none

to stop me, for all were engaged in defending the stockade.

'The fire at last! It burned bright and clear in front of a larger hut than the rest, and round it sat a ring of witch-doctresses mumbling incantations. So intent were they upon this that I drove my assegai through the nearest before they discovered that a Zulu warrior was in their very midst. *Au!* the she-cats! What a yell they gave as they flung themselves on the ground and screeched for mercy! But I laughed, and, having speared two more of them as they lay there, I snatched the flaming brands from the fire and flung them upon the thatch of half a dozen of the nearest huts, which in an instant were a mass of flame and smoke.

'All this had taken but a moment of time, and now, as my pursuers came up, I shovelled as much of the fire upon my shield as I had time to do, then started to run, dodging them round the huts as before. As I came to the stockade again, those defending it looked round, and seeing a strange figure bearing fire upon a shield, must have taken me in the fray for one of their own witch-doctresses,

and instead of attacking me they waited to see what I would do. But they had not long to wait.

'Darting through them, I poured the whole glowing burning mass into the stockade; and, indeed, it was high time, for my shield was nearly charred through. The thick thorn-fence was as dry as months of uninterrupted sunshine could make it. It caught at once, shooting out into myriads of serpentine tongues of fire. *Hau!* It roared, it crackled, and already the flames from the huts I had first set on fire were darting like lightning from thatch to thatch!

'"I return, men of the King!" I roared, fearing to be mistaken for one of the Basutu and speared as I leaped back over the stockade. A shout of recognition greeted my words, and, striking right and left, I plunged through the now flaming fence, through the fire itself.

'"Now we have them!" I cried, as I once more found myself among my own people. "A pretty blaze! Now have we smoked the game from its cover!"

'As the words left my lips there burst forth a

wild shrieking and yelling. The wind had fanned the flames so that the kraal was now one mass of red fire and whirling smoke-clouds. The women and children, panic-stricken, were fleeing wildly, rushing headlong upon our spears. But just then the fighting Basutu, massing into a body, charged furiously out of the kraal on the side I was attacking. With their heads lowered, emitting from their teeth a succession of the most shrill and strident whistles, striking to right and to left with their assegais and battle-axes, on they came. Not even the King's troops could have charged more impetuously, more unswervingly. *Whau!* In a moment they were in our midst. In a moment we had closed up around them. Their whole fighting strength was here, and we had hemmed it in. In a moment they were all broken up into furious struggling groups—and how they fought, how we fought! It was silence then. No man spoke—no man shouted. You could hear only the gasp of laboured breathing, the stamp of striving feet, the jarring crash of shields and weapons, the dull thump of a falling body, the crackling roar of the

blazing kraal, whence clouds of smoke were floating across our faces and blinding our eyes so that we could hardly see each other, and struck and stabbed wildly at random, to the peril of friend as well as of foe. But it could not last—we were too many, too invincible. We stood stupidly staring at each other, swaying, tottering with exhaustion and excitement, for the fray had been fierce. Before, around us, lay heaps of weltering corpses, hacked and battered, the blood welling from scores of spear-stabs. These we ripped according to our custom; those of the enemy, that is; for of our own warriors there were also heaps of slain; indeed, the Basutu had fought like cornered lions. No prayer for mercy was upon their lips. Brave, fierce, defiant to the last, they had fallen.

'And now above the crackling roar of the flames and the wild, fierce, triumphant shout which swelled to the heavens from our victorious throats came the doleful shrieking of women, who saw their little ones speared or flung into the flames, who themselves lay beneath the sharp kiss of the

spear-blade; for we Zulus, when we see red, spare no living thing. And we saw red that day—ah, yes, we saw red. Ha! By the time a man could have counted fifty from the moment the fighting had ceased not one who had inhabited that kraal, even to the last dog, was left alive.

'"*Hau!*" cried Gungana, the second *induna* in command of our *impi*, as he stood gazing upon a heap of the slaughtered women, among whom were several who were young and pleasant to look upon. "*Hau!* I think we have made too much of a mouthful of the King's enemies. Now, some of these would have been better alive than dead, for of girls among us we have none too many. It is a pity we did not save some."

'"Perhaps so," said I. "But, deferring to your head-ring, O Gungana, I seem to have heard the King say he liked not these intermarriages, and the mingling of the blood of the Amazulu, 'the People of the Heavens,' with that of inferior races."

'I fancied that Gungana looked at me somewhat askance, and a queer smile played about his bearded

lips. He was that same *induna* who had come over to us with Tshaka's force, and him our King had promoted to great honour.

'"*Whau*, Umtúswa! Thou art but a boy, and claimest to know over-much of the King's mind," he said.

'"In fear I do so, my father," I replied deferentially. "I ask nothing but such a fight as we have had to-day. And have I not fought?" showing my hacked and charred shield and my body streaming with blood from several ugly gashes. "Did I not put in the fire that smoked these wolves out of their den? And now, O my father, will you not whisper it in the ear of the King that the son of Ntelani, although but a boy, can fight, can plan?"

'"It may be that I will do so, Untúswa," he answered.

'But that strange look was still upon his face as he turned away, and I liked it not. For by this time my continual presence about the King was looked upon with distrust by many of the *indunas*. Even my father was jealous of me, and this being

so, wherefore should Gungana look upon me with more favourable eyes? But it was in his power to speak the word which should obtain for me my head-ring, or not to speak it, wherefore I treated him almost as deferentially as I would the King himself. Moreover, I flattered him.

'"*Au!*" I cried, "am I not but a thoughtless boy? Who am I that I should boast of my own deeds in the presence of an *induna* of the King, before the brain which thought for the *impi*, before the eyes which were the sight of the *impi*? Let it be but whispered in the King's ear that the son of Ntelani was near the right hand of Gungana throughout the battle. That will be distinction enough."

'This told. The *induna* turned half round to listen, and a different expression came into his face. This time he looked pleased.

'"Rest easy, son of Ntelani," he said. "The man *whom I sent* to set fire to the kraal will not be forgotten."

'We Zulus are not like you white people, *Nkose*, whose faces are to be read like a white man reads a

book, else had I been quite undone that day. For the idea of setting the kraal on fire had been entirely my own—planned by me, carried out by me alone; that, too, only in time to save us from defeat, which would have meant ruin to Gungana, if not death. And now he coolly gave me to understand that all the credit of it, the generalship of it, was to belong to him. This I had thought was the feat which should win me honour among the people, and my head-ring at the approving word of the King, and now it was all to go to the credit of my commander. I could hardly keep my face from speaking the wrath and disgust I felt—yet I did so, and called out that Gungana was my father, and as his child I had been privileged to do his bidding. For although it flashed upon me that if ever a day of reckoning should come Gungana would fare badly at my hands, yet now I wanted his good word; wherefore I flattered him.

'Just then my eye was attracted by a movement among a heap of bodies lying piled up near me. I thought I heard a smothered groan. Then all

the wolf-nature of my warrior blood sprang up within me. Here, then, was something more to slay. Good! With kindling eyes I gripped anew my broad assegai and leaped to the group of bodies. Yes; it was a groan. A pair of legs was protruding from the pile and feebly moving. Seizing them by the ankles, I tugged with all my might.

'"Come forth," I growled, for I was holding my assegai in my mouth to leave both hands free. "Come forth, and taste blade over again. Ha! killing is the only thing good to live for, after all. Come forth!"

'Jerking out these words, I threw the corpses aside as one might throw faggots from a stack of firewood. Then another tug, and I found I was holding by the legs the body of an old man, wrinkled and white-bearded. Beyond a gash or two in the chest, he seemed unwounded, but his head was covered with blood. Clearly, a blow had felled him, but how was he still alive, how had he escaped being ripped, as is our custom?

'"Ha! I will make that good," I muttered savagely, seizing my assegai with that intent.

But something in the old man's aspect arrested my arm.

'He was, as I have said, very wrinkled and white-bearded. But his eyes—ah, such eyes! bright, keen, glittering—they were the eyes of a youth who, shoulder to shoulder with his fellow-warriors, is sweeping down upon his first enemy, instead of the filmy orbs of an old man who is tired of looking on this world. They seemed to burn, to pierce through me, to wither up all the strength of my right arm. I could not strike the spear down into his vitals; I could not remove my gaze from his. It was terrible! If his eyes burned like this while he was weak and wounded, and almost lifeless, what would they be like in the full vigour of health? And then I saw that his neck and body were hung with trappings and charms such as the *izanusi** use.

'"Strike and slay me, if thou wilt, son of the King's *induna*," he said, and his eyes seemed to glitter more fiercely, like those of a snake. "But if so, thou shalt never attain thy dearest desire."

* Witch-doctors.

'"Son of the King's *induna*," he had said. This was *tagati** indeed. How did he know my estate?

'"And what desire I the most at this moment?" said I.

'"The head-ring," he whispered.

'"All young warriors desire that," I answered with a laugh. "Tell me, O my father, if thy *múti* is strong enough, what desire I further, together with the *isicoco*?"

'"The dark-handled assegai of the King," he answered, without a moment's pause.

'"*Whau!*" I cried, bringing my hand to my mouth, and starting back in staring, open-mouthed amazement. This was more than marvellous. The promise which Umzilikazi had made to me, half laughingly, when we two were alone together, was known to this old sorcerer of an alien race, who must have been many days distant at the time. Nor, of course, had he ever seen Nangeza, who alone shared the secret. My desire for the head-ring proved nothing as to his wonder-working

* Wizardry.

powers, because, as I had said, all young men wished for that. But this! In truth it was more than marvellous!

'"Thy *múti* is indeed strong, O my father!" I went on when I had recovered a little. "But say—shall I obtain that which I desire?"

'"If I die here thou shalt never obtain it. If I live thou shalt have the King's dark-handled assegai."

'Now, while I had been talking with this wonderful old man, my comrades and the bulk of our *impi* had been seated on the ground resting after the violence and fury of the fight. Some, too, had wounds to attend to; but all were sitting or lying about resting, and the place where I now stood being a little depression in the ground, they had not noticed me. Now, however, attracted by the sound of voices, several of them came swaggering up.

'"Ha, Untúswa!" roared the foremost. "You have found more meat to kill. Come, we will help you kill it." And, poising his assegai, he sprang forward to the old Mosutu* witch-doctor.

* Basutu is a plural word, and denotes the tribe, or more than one member of it. The singular is Mosutu.

'"Stand! Stand back!" I thundered. "This is not a man to kill. He must be taken to the King."

'"To the King! Ha, ha! The King does not want to see the faces of such withered old images. You are mad, Untúswa."

'"Mad or sane, this man shall be taken to the King," I answered.

'"Ha! Since when has Untúswa, the *umfane*,* been made an *induna?*" they jeered. "Of a truth he believes himself a bigger man than the King."

And others, drawn by the tumult, had come to join the first, and now the air rang with roars and shouts of derision. But above them all the old man's marvellously prophetic words still echoed in my ears. At all risks I was determined to save him.

'"Who is the most about the King, O pack of fools?" I cried. "Yourselves or I? Know, then, that the Elephant, whose tread shaketh the world, has heard much of these Basutu *izanusi*, who learn

* 'Boy,' *i.e.*, technically, one who has not attained to the distinction of the head-ring.

their magic in dark caves of the mountains—has often wished to converse with them and test their skill. Here is one of them at last, and go to the King he shall. I would not give much for the life of the man who slays him."

'Standing over the old witch-doctor with my assegai in my hand confronting that riotous, roaring crowd, flushed with victory and bloodshed, I know not how things might have gone even then. But at that moment the *induna* Gungana, attracted by the tumult, himself drew near, and that in time to catch my last words.

'"Give way!" he said, striding through the group—"give way! What is this? An *isanusi*, and alive? By the head-ring of the Great Great One from whose rule we have gone out, but he must have brought himself to life again, for assuredly all were slain but a moment before. Ha! that is well. Now shall the King have his oft-expressed wish. He shall behold this Mosutu rain-maker, and test his magic. What—is that you, Untúswa?"

'Now, it happened that Umzilikazi had expressed

no such wish. In my despair of finding a plea, I had invented this as a reason for sparing the old magician. I could see now that Gungana's design was to supplant me in this, even as he had done in my plan for overmastering the Basutu kraal. If sparing the life of the old witch-doctor proved acceptable to the King, he, Gungana, would get the credit for it; if not—then I laughed to myself, for in that case he would have fallen into his own trap. And if anything should go wrong with the King hereafter, who but Gungana was it who had brought this foreign wizard into our camp? But before I could answer a shout went up from the warriors standing in the background, and all heads were turned accordingly.

'"The King! The King is coming!"

'And the words were taken up by all there present, and, with the phrases of *bonga* flowing thick and fast from our lips, all eyes were turned upon a cloud of dust on the horizon—distant, but drawing nearer and nearer.

'"Go now, Untúswa, who art the chief runner. Go now, and meet the Great Great One with word of our victory," commanded Gungana.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TYAY'IGAMA DANCE.

'HARDLY had the word left Gungana's lips than I was up and away. No thought of the witch-doctor was in my mind as I sped over the ground in that long, even trot which I could keep up for days, and eventually overtake a horse which had started at the same time. Of cuts and stabs many were upon me, and I was red and hideous with blood, flowing or dried. But this mattered less than nothing, and I laughed loud and joyously as I coursed along to be the first to bear to the King the news he most loved to hear. Of a truth, the old *isanusi* I had saved from death—if, indeed, I had saved him from death—had gone clean out of my mind. Yet, if I had but known it, that day was to my life what the bent rods are to the roof of a hut.

'Soon I found myself in the midst of the great dust-cloud we had seen, and behind it came herds of cattle spreading over the plain, tended by women and boys of all ages. These were the herds which we had brought out from Zululand, increased by those we had taken from the tribes on our way, and which we were carrying with us to the land where we should be commanded to settle.

'"'Make way!" I shouted. "Make way for the 'ears of the King'!"

'Then the women shrieked with excitement, and the boys, rushing in among the cattle with shrill whoops, scattered them out of my way; for the path of the King's messenger must be straight, and woe to whosoever shall obstruct it. The bellowing and trampling of the cattle mingled with the shouts and cries as I dashed straight on. Then I heard a voice say:

'"*Yau!* It is Untúswa! Is he not a man? Is he not a warrior indeed, covered with blood and wounds, and carrying the King's 'word'? Look at him, Sitéle!"

'I knew the voice, still I could not refrain from

turning my head ever so slightly as I ran. Close to my path I beheld Nangeza, looking so tall and fine and straight, standing there with her little sister. *Whau, Nkose!* I would have gone against those Basutu kraals again single-handed to have been allowed to *tunga* with her for a wife.

'Then came another cloud of dust, and the steady tramp of marching feet, and the hum of deep-toned voices; then a wavy shimmer of spear-points, like the sunshine on the blue sea. Spread out over the plain in four dense black columns the regiments marched, and as I, looking neither to the right nor to the left, sped between these, the confused wonder which had greeted my first appearance was succeeded by a dead expectant silence.

'Umzilikazi was riding on horseback near the rear of the army, surrounded by a group of *indunas*, among whom was my father. A circle of *izanusi*, clad in cow-tails and entrails and all the hideous paraphernalia of their order, preceded the King, dancing and waving green boughs as they chanted his praises, and the swift and sudden destruction

which even then was falling upon his enemies. As I drew near the doctors scattered out of my path like a lot of frightened jackals, for even they must give way before him who bears the King's message. Casting my shield and assegais to the ground where their circle had been—for no man may approach armed to have speech with the King—I advanced ten paces nearer, and, halting, raised my right hand and shouted a sonorous *Bayéte!* Then I prostrated myself to the earth.

'"Rise, son of Ntelani," said the King, as soon as the thunder of the salute royal, which had been immediately caught up and re-echoed by the whole army, had ceased. "Rise, and speak thy 'word.'"

'"Those against whom we went forth are removed from the path of the King!" I cried out in a loud voice. "The smoke of their dwellings is rising to the heavens yonder. The path of the King is straight!"

'An immense chorus of *bonga* went up from the army when I had spoken. All were eager to arrive at the scene of the victory. Then the King bade

me withdraw, which I was not sorry to do, for I was tired and fasting.

'You may have observed, *Nkose*, that my news was of victory alone; that no questions were asked as to our losses, who had been killed or who had not. It is not the custom of us Zulus, on these occasions, to mix up good and ill news. It was sufficient that the King's enemies were stamped out. The relatives of the slain could hold ceremonies of mourning afterwards if they wished, but that was a private undertaking. Wherefore I only announced to the ears of the nation at large that we were victorious.

'And then, as we drew near to the scene of our fierce and bloody conflict, what remained of the *impi* which had gone out against the Basutu kraals drew near to hail the King. It had gone out a full regiment—as we were in those days about fifteen hundred men—but little more than half were left alive; for, as I have said, the Basutu were numerous, and had fought bravely. Still, as our warriors advanced in a column with waving plumes, and beating time with shield and assegai

to the thunder of a mighty war-song, and the marks of the recent battle upon them, my heart swelled within me as I thought that I had borne a man's part that day with these.

'"Go forward, Untúswa," said the King, who had caught sight of me in the ranks. "Go forward and join the fighters, you who have fought so well this day. Your place is among them."

'I thundered out the royal praises, and darted forth to meet those who were approaching; and falling into my place, we advanced, singing:

'"Hail, King, Father of a new nation!
We, thy children, have smoothed a way before thee.
Thine enemies—where are they?
Their dwellings—where are they?
As the smoke which climbeth to heaven their might is broken and shattered.
Might? Ha! ha!
No might had these; like blades of the grass when trampled,
Down went their bravest before the might of the Elephant,
Beneath the foot of the Elephant, whose tread shaketh the world.
Hail, King! Father! the chief and the maker of nations!'

'Thus sang the warriors, their voices roaring like the thunder of the heavens. Then, having prostrated ourselves, we rose, and wheeling up we

fell into rank before the whole army escorting the King, and the march was continued until we were some distance beyond the smoking ruins of the Basutu kraals, for we might not halt upon the site of the battle, lest those who had borne no part in shedding it might be defiled by the blood that had flowed. Here our vast camp was pitched, and by the light of hundreds of fires we who had fought, having gone through the ceremony of purification at the hands of the *izanusi*, were paraded before the King in full war array, and such of us as could establish a claim were allowed to perform the *Tyay'igama*, or the "calling by name," dance.

'This custom, you must know, *Nkose*, is one which consists of warriors who have performed deeds of distinction during the recent battle being pointed at by their commanders and called forward out of the ranks to dance before the King, while narrating their claims to notice for especial valour —who they have killed and how it has been done. They dance and leap with a quickness and to a height that would astonish you white people, springing from the earth more than their own

height in the air, clashing their shields with both feet while leaping, and so on—the while telling of their deeds. It is arranged with the *indunas* in command as to who shall be allowed so to claim notice, and Gungana had readily accorded me a first place.

'Ha! that night! It was a sight to live in a man's memory. By the red light of a thousand huge fires there was assembled the whole might of a nation, of a new nation, of a nation of warriors. The King sat in the midst of his *indunas*, an open space before him. On either side stretched a monster crescent of armed men, the glint of their spears, the sheen of their great hide shields, flickering in the wavy glow. Up the middle of this space our *impi* advanced, singing a battle-song, even the war-song of Umzilikazi:

'"Yaingahlabi leyo'nkunzi!
Yai ukúfa!"*

Then, halting before the King, we shouted the

* 'That bull did not gore!
It was death!'

—meaning 'That bull *did* gore,' but in the most deadly manner.

Bayéte, and falling back, left a space for those who were to perform in the dance.

'They came out one by one, each, as he paused to take breath after recounting his deeds, being greeted by a roar of applause from the throats of the surrounding warriors. Then my turn came.

'I know not how it was, *Nkose*, unless it were the thoughtless rashness of youth, which has caused me to do many foolish and fatal things, but which has also carried me unscathed through their fearful consequences; but when I found myself thus, with a free hand, I forgot all prudence and diplomacy.

'Bounding forward in all my bravery of war, in my jackals' tails and cowhair, with a great plume of cranes' feathers streaming from my head, rapping my great shield against my knees, I leaped high in the air about ten times, each time spinning completely round before touching ground again. The roaring "Ha! ha!" with which the whole multitude greeted this display completely intoxicated me. I felt as mad, as drunk, as though I had partaken of the white man's *tywala*. With my

eyes blazing from my head, I cried aloud the whole story of our attack upon the kraal. Not a word said I of having been Gungana's left hand, of having carried out the plan which Gungana *sent me to carry out.* No, of this not a word; instead, I poured forth the whole naked truth—how that Masipele, the head *induna*, being killed, the *impi* was on the point of suffering defeat, when I conceived the idea of braving certain death by myself entering the kraal, which the rest were unable to enter, and myself setting it on fire, thus forcing the Basutu into the open and saving the day. I shouted out the number and description of the enemies who had fallen by my hand, and went through the exact performance of how they had met me and how I had slain them; but all the time never a word about Gungana and his generalship. I told no more, no less than the truth, with all my boasting; but, *Nkose*, he who does this is frequently no more and no less than a very great fool—at least, so it is among ourselves; I know not how it may be among you white people.

'Well, I was carried away by my conceit; partly

because, when I leaped in the air, I could see in the background, above and beyond the surrounding regiments, the face and form of my love, Nangeza. She was standing among the women, watching, listening in a perfect ecstasy of admiration and excitement. This was what nerved me to go through a *Tyay'igama* performance such as, surely, could never have been seen before. I extolled myself and my own deeds as though I were the only man alone in the whole world. The roaring shouts of the warriors rent the night in a frenzy of enthusiasm. The King, I could see, looked upon me approvingly, and I heard him mutter to my father, Ntelani, that he had bred a right good lion-cub indeed. I was drunk with my success. Then, when I had told all my story, as I was the last, the King gave orders for the beef feast to begin and the *Tyay'igama* dance was at an end.

'The huge joints were hissing and sputtering upon the fires, giving forth a most delicious odour to our hungry nostrils, and as we squatted around waiting until they should be sufficiently cooked, we

talked over the events of the day, and congratulated ourselves on having escaped from the rule of Tshaka. For to us younger men there was something intoxicating in this journeying in search of a new land, fighting our way as we went, stamping out tribe after tribe which lay in our path. And Umzilikazi, had he not a free and an open hand? He never stinted his warriors, and after such a battle as that of to-day there was beef and *tywala* enough and to spare. Yes, it was good to *konza* to Umzilikazi. Moreover, he rarely caused any of his subjects to be killed; unlike Tshaka, who was wont to keep the slayers pretty busy. Had but another regiment or two joined us, we might have been strong enough to overturn the House of Senzangakona, to have slain Tshaka, and set up Umzilikazi as King in Zululand. Then we need never have started in search of a new country. On such matters, *Nkose*, did the tongues of us young men wag when among ourselves.

'After the feast, while I was returning to my place in the camp—for we had no huts at that time, moving as we were from day to day—some-

one came behind me in the darkness, and a man's voice said:

'"You are as great in the *Tyay'igama* dance as in battle, son of Ntelani. And I think you are greater with your tongue than in either." I knew the voice as that of Gungana, but its tone—ah! I liked not that.

'"It is as you say, O my father," I answered. "But I am a child—and children sometimes talk too much."

'"That is so, Untúswa," he said. "And sometimes a dog thinks himself bigger than his master. The dog runs down and catches the buck, but tell me, *umfane*, who takes the dog to where he may find the buck?"

'"His master," I answered. "But the dog is carried away by the chase, and sometimes finds it difficult to quit the game he has killed."

'"Until he is *whipped off*, Untúswa. And that has to be done sometimes. Ha! Go now and rest, for you must be badly in need of it after all your exertions."

'Then Gungana left me, and I felt very uneasy.

In my foolish egotism I had omitted any reference to him, had claimed all the credit—which, though really my due, I was a fool to insist on—and now the dark meaning of his words, the malice underlying his cold, sneering tones, left me under no sort of doubt that I had made for myself a most dangerous enemy. My attempts at apology had been lame in the extreme. Gungana had seen through them, and they had failed to appease him. And he was a powerful *induna*, and would certainly succeed to the command of my regiment. Of a truth, *Nkose*, when I lay down that night, it seemed that my coveted head-ring and the fulfilment of the King's promise had faded away into the very furthest mists of the never-to-be.

CHAPTER V.

THE MOSUTU WITCH-DOCTOR.

'You will be wondering, *Nkose*, what had become of the old Mosutu witch-doctor whose life I had spared, and who was the sole survivor of his people. The morning after the battle and the feast, before we resumed our march, Umzilikazi ordered the old man to be brought before him.

'I was in attendance upon the King that day, and was acting as his shield-bearer. It was my duty to stand behind him as he sat among the *indunas*, holding the great white shield above his head to shade him from the sun. This was an office the King often had me to perform in preference to most of the other young men of his body-guard, wherefore I heard much deliberation

of matters, such as would have astounded many in our host, could they but have guessed they were known to the King—yes, and would have put them in terror for their lives. But these were matters for which I had neither eyes nor ears, and although I had revealed a secret to Nangeza—and that foolishly—it was one which concerned myself alone, and for the others, I would have suffered any death rather than let fall breath of them.

'Standing thus behind Umzilikazi, I was able to command the fullest view of the old witch-doctor, and as they brought him along I noticed that he showed no sign of fear. His eyes were as bright and piercing as before; and his old body, bowed and wrinkled with age, looked hardly human, so shrunken and withered was it.

'"Are the ghosts of those slain yonder come to life again in this old man?" I heard the King mutter as he signed the Mosutu to rise up from the prostration he had made. "What is thy name, old man?"

'"I am called Masuka, lord. The guardian

spirits of the Bapedi tribe whisper in my ears."

'"Ha, the Bapedi! So that is the name of those we swept out of our path yesterday."

'"It is, lord. Yet there are more of them left; but they dwell in the mountains."

'"Then fortunate are they, for so far as I care they can stay there," said the King. "It is only those lying in my path whom I sweep aside. But, old man, thy serpents* must have been powerful yesterday, in that thou art the only one who has escaped with life from the fangs of my hunting dogs. Yet am I not sorry, for I have heard much of the powers of the Basutu *izanusi*, and would fain see some proof of them."

'"The hour is not propitious, King," replied the old man in a wearied sort of tone, with a glance at the heavens.

'A great growl of astonishment went up from all who heard this answer. The *indunas* sat open-mouthed with amazement. This wretched,

* A favourite form of tutelary deity among Zulus is the serpent.

shrivelled little old monkey, whose life had been spared by the merest chance, instead of being all eagerness to meet the King's wishes, had returned a curt, almost contemptuous refusal.

'"*Atyi!* Was ever such a thing heard of!" they cried. "He is mad! He is tired of life!"

'But Umzilikazi made no reply. He whispered a word to one of the *indunas*, who rose and went away. In a few moments the sound of singing was heard, and a band of about twenty men and as many women was seen approaching. Rattling with bones and bladders, bristling with porcupine quills and feathers, some of them crowned with dry and fleshless skulls, others twining snakes about their necks and arms, in them we recognised our own mystic circle — the witch-doctors who had accompanied us on our migration.

'"*Bayéte!*" they shouted, halting suddenly before the King, whom they had approached in a wild and whirling dance. "We smell a hyena—we smell a jackal—we smell a wizard—an impostor! Give him to us, O King, Lord of the nations! Let

him die the death, lest he bewitch us, and our path be no longer smooth! Give him to us, that we may eat him up! *Hou! hou! hou!*"

'The whole circle was now whirling around the old Mosutu, springing at him in the attitude of wild beasts, snapping and growling. So frenzied were they, that the foam fell from their hideous mouths, and, indeed, I began to think they would end by really biting and tearing their rival to pieces. I found myself bending eagerly, anxiously forward in my suspense. But the old man sat there as unconcerned as though there was nobody within a day's journey of him.

'"See, O King!" they howled in their fury. "We will eat him up—blood, bones, every fragment—as he sits there! All is possible with us. We are crocodiles—we are hyenas—we are lions! *Hou! hou! hou!*"

'"Hear you what these say, Masuka?" said the King.

'"I hear a noise, lord. But—who are these?"

'The pity, the contempt, in the old man's tone as he gazed wonderingly round upon the circle of

frenzied magicians, I can hardly convey. They, seeing it, roared with rage.

'"Thus does this impostor speak of the King's *izanusi!*" they howled.

'"*Izanusi?*" said the Mosutu. "Can they be *izanusi*—these?"

'"Show him what you can do," said the King.

'Then our witch-doctors went through the most appalling performances. Some fell down in fits, during which they tore their own ears off; others gashed themselves, and stood on their heads for long at a time, and howled. Some placed snakes round their necks, and by compressing the reptiles' throats caused themselves to be all but strangled in their constrictions. One man produced a huge serpent as long as himself and as thick as his own arm, and, indeed, this was the most marvellous of all, for where he could have secreted it passed all men's comprehension. But all the while the old Mosutu sat watching these performances with the same smile of contemptuous pity.

'"Now, Masuka," said the King, as he signed to the *izanusi* to desist, "show thyself a greater

magician than these, and thou shalt have thy life. Thou must show me something I have never seen before. If thou failest in this, I swear that thou shalt be eaten alive by these. I am bent upon seeing something new this day, and the spectacle of a man eaten alive by men will be a new one indeed. So pray for success upon thy magic."

'The furious howlings of our own magicians were renewed. There was an awesome, uneasy expression upon the faces of the lookers-on. Never was Umzilikazi known to depart from his word. Unless, therefore, the old Mosutu should show us some very strange and startling thing, he would certainly meet with a fate which to us Zulus—accustomed as we were to bloodshed in the ordinary way—seemed in the last degree horrible. Again, if he fulfilled his undertaking, we might look for some very terrifying exhibition of magic. Wherefore, the awe which rested upon every face is beyond words.

'"Begin," said the King. "Begin, old man. We wait."

'Masuka stared in front of him for a few

moments, his lips moving. Suddenly he gave a convulsive start and fell over motionless. Time went by, yet no sign of life did he show. At last the King, tired of waiting, rose and went over to look at the apparently lifeless body.

'"He is as cold as a stone," he said.

'"I think he is really dead, Great Great One!" I whispered, for, as the King's shield-bearer, I alone had accompanied him from his place. "See he does not even breathe."

'"He is not dead, Untúswa," answered the King. "*Whau!* I have seen this trick before, but never better done. Yet he must show us something more than this if he is to keep his life. See; place snuff in his nostrils."

'I hastened to obey, and as I bent over the set, rigid face, a glance into the wide-open but apparently sightless eyes all but unnerved me. Lustreless and filmy, there yet seemed such a demon-like power lying beneath their black depths. It made me feel as though I were looking into a dark and terrible pit, with some monster of unimaginable hideousness and cruelty lurking at the

bottom. The hand which held the snuff spoon shook, and I could hardly carry out the King's command.

'But with his nostrils well filled with snuff—and, indeed, there must have been a good deal in his throat, for my unsteady hand had spilt some—the old Mosutu never sneezed, never choked. He was not emitting the very faintest breath.

'"He is dead!" said Umzilikazi at last. "Remove him."

'Now, for a long time we had been watching, and so, when the King's word was given, there were not wanting those who were eager to drag the wizard's body away out of the camp as soon as possible. There was a rush forward, but no sooner had the thong been placed around the ankles, than those who held it leaped high in the air with a cry of alarm. For the dead wizard had uttered a most thunderous sneeze. Another and another broke from his chest as he sat up, and, looking around, set to work coolly to loosen the thong from his ankles.

'"Thy snuff is strong, Untúswa," said the King,

bursting out laughing. "Well, old man, that was well done; I have never seen it better done. Still, I have seen it done before."

'"Can these do it better, lord, son of Matyobane?" asked Masuka, pointing to our own magicians.

'"Not so well. Now, Masuka, let this be the new feat, and, by my head-ring, if it is not new, nothing shall save thee from the fate I promised."

'A roar of *bonga* went up from all. When it had subsided, the old man said:

'"Search me. Let the King see himself that it is done thoroughly." And he stretched out his arms.

'"Search him, Untúswa," said Umzilikazi. "Search him while I watch."

'Handing the royal shield to another of the body-guard, I stepped forward. So frail and puny did the little old man look, his head hardly reaching to my chest, his withered limbs like bits of broken stick, that it seemed as though I could have blown him away. Yet I feared him. I feared the

glitter of his snake-like eyes. But I feared the King even more, wherefore I was careful to show no sign of hesitation.

'Save for a very scanty *mútya* around his loins and a strip of hide which served as a bandage to his bruised and battered head, the old Mosutu was entirely naked. He no longer wore even his mystic adornments as witch-doctor. In a moment I was able to satisfy myself that there was absolutely nothing upon him.

'"Where hast thou deposited thy *múti*, old man?" said the King, when I had reported this. "Shall it not be brought?"

'"I require it not, lord. Such as these," with a sweep of the arm towards our own *izanusi*, "such as these require many things—I, nothing."

'"Proceed, then."

'"Yonder is a mound upon the plain," pointing to a small rise outside our lines about four times the distance a man could cast a spear. "Does the King allow me to proceed yonder alone?'

'"Go," said Umzilikazi.

'There lay upon our host a deep, dead silence,

such as might be felt. Every breath was drawn in, every head bent forward, every eye dilated upon the little shrivelled form of the old witch-doctor as he shambled forth from our midst to the spot indicated.

'Arrived there, he lay flat upon the ground, placing his ear against it as though he were talking to someone beneath and listening for an answer; and, indeed, talking he was, for we could hear the muttering of his voice. Then he raised himself to a sitting posture, with his back towards us and his face turned upward to the heavens, and, lo, a marvel! There arose a thread of smoke, light, filmy, then thicker and blacker, till soon there poured upward a black column, in thickness as a man's leg; and while we gazed there leaped into the smoke-pillar a ball of flame, and as it did so it gave forth a booming roar even as the thunder of the *baï-nbaï*,* which wrought such havoc among us Zulus yonder at Kambúla. Another and another followed, and then the blackness of the smoke ceased, and it rose blue

* Cannon.

and clear, and a gasp and shiver of wonder ran through our people, for the grass around the old Mosutu was blazing. He was standing in a ring of flame.

'"Bid your *izanusi* put out this fire, O King of a new nation, if they dare approach the spot whence the Fire Spirit, who dwells in the heart of the world, has lifted up his voice," cried Masuka, stepping through the flaming circle and advancing towards us.

'Though thrilling with awe and wonderment myself, I had not omitted to watch Umzilikazi's countenance during the witch-doctor's manifestation. Fear was upon all other faces, but upon that of the King was only curiosity, and I thought triumph. Now he turned to the *izanusi*, and said:

'"Do his bidding."

'Their countenances told as plainly as possible that they liked not their errand. But to hesitate meant death, for Umzilikazi would not tolerate so much as a moment of hesitation in obeying his orders, not even from an *isanusi*. So with loud yells the whole band dashed forward, and with

their green boughs beat out the flames, which, indeed, were spreading fiercely in the dry grass.

'"Is the King satisfied?" said Masuka, as, having prostrated himself, he rose to his knees.

'Umzilikazi looked at him steadily for a moment. Then his eyes grew stern, and we who saw it trembled.

'"Do you know what we do with *abatagati?*" he said.

'"My life is in the King's hands," answered the old Mosutu without flinching.

'"Ha! the death of the hot stones. Let us see now if the fire-maker can also be the fire-quencher!" said the King, giving a sign. And in obedience thereto those in attendance for such purposes sprang forward to seize the old man; while others, with incredible rapidity, kindled fire and fanned it to a roaring blaze. Into this several flat stones were placed. *Au! Nkose*, it is a terrible thing, the death of the hot stones! A man may live a whole day in agony of torment, for the stones are placed upon his naked body and held on

him with sticks until they burn their own way into his vitals.

'Those whose work it was to hold down the *Umtagati* while he underwent this torment were not over-fond of the task, for the manifestation of his powers which old Masuka had afforded had struck fear into us all. But even this was small in comparison with the wrath of the King, so there was no hesitation. In a moment the old man lay stretched on his back; already the slayers were bringing the stones hot from the fire to place upon him. Yet these preparations he was watching without the smallest sign of fear.

'"Hold!" cried the King.

'Those who bore the hot stones—which were carried resting in the middle of two sticks—paused.

'"Release him."

'This, too, was immediately done.

'"I was but trying thee, old man," said Umzilikazi; "I was but trying thee, and right well hast thou come through the ordeal. Yet, I think, had I detected but a sign of fear, I would have left thee to the terrible death of torture. But I see thou art

afraid of nothing, and I love such, wherefore I grant thee thy life."

'"*Baba! Nkose!*"* cried old Masuka, prostrating himself and kissing the King's foot. And all men, with right hand uplifted, shouted with a mighty voice in praise of the King's justice and the King's mercy.

'Thus came it about that the Mosutu witch-doctor was adopted as one of ourselves.

* 'Father! Chief!'

CHAPTER VI.

A FORMIDABLE RIVAL.

'SHORTLY after these things happened, it befell that I was alone in attendance upon the King, in his hut; for although, being on the march, no kraal could be built, yet if we came to a halting-place he liked, Umzilikazi would cause a few huts to be erected for himself and his wives.

'"Well, Untúswa," he said to me, being in a chatty mood, for he would ofttimes unbend thus and talk familiarly with me when we were alone together, while keeping great *indunas* like my father, or Gungana, at a distance, and in humble attitude. But, then, me he regarded as a child. "Well, Untúswa, and what think you of this stranger *isanusi*, whom Gungana has brought us? Is it for good or for ill that he is among us?"

'"Who am I, that I should presume to answer such a question, O Great Great One?" I said. "Yet his *máti* was wonderful—it caused all men to tremble."

'The King laughed.

'"Did *I* tremble, son of Ntelani? Was there fear in *my* face?" he said.

'"Fear? Fear in the eyes of the Elephant whose tread shaketh the world! Now, my father, how could such a thing be?" I answered.

'"Good," he said, filling out a measure of snuff. Then, with his spoon arrested in mid-air: "I think he has come among us for good, Untúswa. Gungana did well to spare his life and bring him hither."

'Now, I bethought me that this praise should have been mine. Had the King's mind been different on the matter, then Gungana was welcome to all the responsibility of it. Now, not so. Wherefore I said—being young, and believing as we still do when young, that right, and not might, is right:

'"That is but a blind side of the case, O Black

Black One! I it was who spared the old Mosutu's life—who not only spared, but saved it—and that in order that he might show the powers of his *múti* before the eyes of the King."

'And then I told the whole tale of how I had saved the magician from the spears even of my brethren-in-arms. But I was not quite prepared for the manner in which it was received.

'"So, Untúswa, you are a bigger man than your *induna?*" said Umzilikazi, in that quiet, half-laughing, but terrible voice he took when he desired to make men's hearts tremble within them. "And did you think, then, to tell me what I knew not—I, to whom all things are known; to whom not a single thing passes unknown, Untúswa, not one single thing?"

'*Au, Nkose!* Then, as the King spoke these words, I knew what fear was if I had never known before. For I thought of Nangeza, and of the sure penalty that we had incurred. No wonder that, with the King's terrible eyes upon me, seeming to burn the very thoughts out of my breast—no wonder, *Nkose*, I should have felt myself growing

gray with fear. But I cried aloud in praise of the wisdom of the Great Great One, and so akin is the most desperate fear to the most intrepid valour, that I—at that moment when the King was in the most to be dreaded of all his moods—took upon myself to urge my claim to the promised reward. Even while doing so I felt that I was digging my own grave. But to my surprise the King burst out laughing.

'"*Au!*" he cried. "Ntelani has bred a lion-cub indeed, and one who knows not fear. But here again, Untúswa, are you not showing yourself, for all your valour, to be but a child? The firing of the kraal was a right valorous deed; yet where was the valour of it in comparison with that of standing before the King this day, to belittle one of the King's *indunas*, and to importune the King at a moment when he would fain sleep? Valour without wisdom means but the destruction of its owner, wherefore learn judgment before aspiring to the *isicoco*. Now go, Untúswa, the would-be *kehla*.*"

* Head-ringed man.

'I shouted the King's titles and went out. But although flattery was on my tongue, hatred and fury were in my heart—the former begotten of those mocking words, the latter of bitter and galling disappointment. I had distinguished myself as surely no young warrior had ever done before. I had gone singlehanded and alone into the midst of swarming enemies, and had saved the day to our *impi* on the point of defeat. I had, in sparing the Mosutu witch-doctor, performed an act which was gratifying to the King, and when I claimed credit for it, he had curtly given me to understand that I was a fool. I had made an enemy of a powerful *induna* rather than forego one hair's-breadth of my claim to distinction. All this I had done deeming my reward near at hand, and sure; but the King had mocked me, and driven me forth with jeering laughter. Well, whether he knew everything or not, death could come but once, and the enjoyment of life was a thing of the present.

'Fired by these thoughts, I sped forth to the place where I knew I should find Nangeza helping

to herd her father's cattle. She was there, even as I expected, with her little sister, Sitéle. I gave her a sign as I passed—for there were other women within sight and I dared not be seen speaking with her—and sped on as though I were going to look for game. But once out of sight of all, I doubled back until I came to a deep, bushy valley which was cleft by a watercourse, now dry. Here I sat down and waited; nor was it long before I was joined by Nangeza.

'"Ha! is that you, son of Ntelani!" she cried, pretending surprise in case our meeting was witnessed. "I have come here to cut firewood," showing a thong for tying it in a bundle.

'"There is no one here. We are quite safe, for I have examined the place well," I answered, drawing her into a still more hidden spot. Then I told her all that had happened, and how the King had again refused my prayer to be allowed to *tunga*. And the worst of it was I dared not apply again for a long time to come. It would almost certainly cost me my life to do so.

'"Not that it matters," I ended sorrowfully.

"It seems to me, Nangeza, that life has no more value—I, who am destined to remain an *umfane* for ever, to do deeds of valour for which others get all the praise."

'"I, too, have ill news for thee, Untúswa," she said. "This day has *lobola** been sent to my father's house—for me."

'"Ha!" I cried. Then a sort of cold despair came over me. "And has your father accepted it?" I said.

'"No. He says it is not enough."

'"They all say that at first," I answered. "But he will accept it or demand a little more. And now, Nangeza, who is the sender of the *lobola?*"

'"Gungana, the King's *induna*."

'"U'Gungana!" I roared, springing to my feet and gripping my assegais. "*Hau!* I will kill him, though I die myself in doing so!"

'"*Gahle, gahle,*† Untúswa!" she cried, flinging her arms round me, and dragging me back by main force.

* The price in cattle paid by the intending bridegroom to the parent or guardian of a girl.

† 'Gently, gently!'

'"U'Gungana! *Hau!* the jackal, the coward dog!" I went on, in the fury and ungovernable excitement into which the news had thrown me. "He stole the praise that was due to me! he claimed credit for the deed he was too cowardly to perform himself! he it is who has poisoned the King's ear against me! He shall die—shall die this day!"

'"He shall not, Untúswa. Listen now—no, you cannot fling me off. I am too strong for even you to do that, and I will not let you go. Listen, now, to what I have to say."

'She spoke truly. I could not shake her off. Calmed by her voice, I sat down gloomily to listen, and bit by bit she unfolded to me a most amazing plan.

'"It is even as the King has just told you, son of Ntelani," she ended up. "Valour without wisdom is the destruction of its owner. Be guided by me, and one day you shall be a greater man than Gungana. I shall be your *Inkosikazi** yet."

* The principal wife of a chief.

'"Hail, *Inkosikazi!* We bow down to thee! We do thee obeisance, *Inkosikazi!*"

'And shrill screams of mocking laughter from the bush on the other side of the *donga* accompanied this most startling interruption.

'"Now, these spies shall die, else are the two of us dead!" I muttered in desperation, gripping my assegais and making to spring across the *donga*. But again Nangeza restrained me.

'"*Gahle, gahle!* Wilt thou never learn wisdom?" she whispered. "They are but girls. Speak to them fair."

'"Come forth," I cried, "lest I come to seek you!"

'"Spare yourself the trouble, son of Ntelani!" they cried, laughing, and stepping from their hiding-place.

'Three there were. Two of them were sisters; the other I recognised as a distant relation of my father Ntelani. And then the awful consternation which had entered my mind at the idea of our deadly plot having been overheard gave way to relief as I remembered that Nangeza's voice had

been sunk to the lowest of whispers. Only the last words had been uttered aloud, and these, if absurd, were not perilous. Gungana, as the commander of my own regiment, would be a natural object of emulation; nor was my love's ambition to see me a leader of men the less natural.

'"Hail, *Izintombi!*"* I cried, with a loud laugh. "You do well thus to greet Nangeza. For I intend to *lobola* for all three of you, as well as for her. Then will she be your *Inkosikazi* indeed."

'"Has the King already granted you the headring, Untúswa?" asked one of the two sisters, when the screams of laughter with which they heard my remark had subsided.

'"You cannot *lobola* for all of us," said the other girl; "for am I not Ntelani's 'sister'?"†

'"*Whau!* that is the more the pity," I said.

* Maidens.

† 'Cousin.' The impediment of 'consanguinity' is respected with extraordinary rigour, and no Zulu will marry even the most distant cousin, or any girl whom there may be reason to suspect of sharing the very faintest strain of his blood.

"As things are, I meant to have sent *lobola* for all three of you, although I am but poor. For how could I make choice of one or two where all are so perfect?"

'This I said in order to keep the good word of their tongues, lest they might whisper abroad evil concerning Nangeza and myself, for even then, *Nkose*, I knew that the surest way to a woman's heart was to tickle her ears with soft and pleasant speech.

'"*Yau!* Only hear him!" they cried. "The son of Ntelani has found his tongue. Forget not, then, when the Great Great One allows thee to *tunga*. Forget not, then, thy word. Fare thee well now, Untúswa—also his *Inkosikazi!*"

'And away they sped, laughing and singing. Not until the sound of their voices had died out did I again speak.

'"I had rather we had not met these, Nangeza," I said. "What if they chatter?"

'"That they will not do. They know you are in the King's favour, Untúswa; besides, you are a famous fighter, and no girl among us would

do anything to injure you. But this place is too open. Come, I know of a better."

'We plunged into the most tangled recesses of the bush, and here, where the boughs met overhead, with creepers trailing in long lines like the white beards of old men, we rested. But our talk was of love, not of the weighty plan wherein life was the stake, about which we had talked before.

'Suddenly there was a rustling noise in the bushes close to us, and, lo! in the most startling manner there rose up the heads of two great *mambas*. At sight of us they gave vent to a furious hiss, waving their crests to and fro.

'We Zulus, you know, *Nkose*, like not to kill a serpent, for the guardian spirit who watches over us often takes that shape, and how can we make war upon it? So when these two *mambas* rose up against us I lifted no weapon. I only prayed, "*O'zinyoka*, do us no hurt," and the two of us withdrew. But as we did so the serpents slowly followed us, with crests erect, and hissing. At last they ceased to follow us, and we could hear the rustle of the bushes as they returned. Then

we sat down again—and—— *Whau, Nkose!* when people are young, and the talk is of love, time goes upon eagle wings. Suddenly Nangeza cried out that we must part, for the sun would soon be down and we had some distance to travel if we would pass the King's outposts before dark.

'We arose to retrace our steps. Already the thorns and dry grass were beginning to crackle under our feet, when I caught Nangeza's wrist and breathed:

'"Silence!"

'The place where we had first rested was on the edge of an open glade, and the distance we had withdrawn from this while retiring before the serpents was about twice that to which a man could fling a spear. On one side of this glade stood a tall rock.

'"Men are coming," I whispered — "armed men."

'We stood thus as still as stones, listening hard. Then I could hear, re-echoed back from the face of the rock, the light tread of feet, the rustle of branches pushed aside, and now and then the

rattle of assegai hafts; and soon, as we crouched low to the earth, we could hear an armed force advance into the open glade and halt.

'Now, *Nkose*, my heart stood still, for I remembered the King's words that morning. Could it be that he who knew everything had sent men after us to surprise us two together and kill us? Then I heard a warrior's deep tones say:

'"*Au!* here are footprints—those of an *intombi*. Those of a man, too!" he added, as one who has made a discovery. "Come, let us see where they lead."

'Crouching down among the thorns and long dry grass we lay, expecting our end; for to be found thus together, at this distance from the camp, meant certain death. There was not a chance for us. We heard the parting of the bushes—then, from where we lay, we could see the heads of several men following our trail, and, but that the trees threw a darkness around and they were too intent on reading their way, they could not have failed to see us. No, there was no escape. We should be seized, dragged before

the King, and not another sun should we see rise.

'But then, while the bitterness of death lay dark upon our hearts, we saw the foremost of the men stop, with a startled look upon his face. Then a quick exclamation escaped him, and he and the rest turned, and went back again. And we knew the meaning of that hissing noise, and the prayer to the serpents cried out by the warriors as they retreated was the same as my own.

'When they returned to the *impi*, the leader was angry with them.

'"What?" we could hear him say. "Are we come out to do the King's errand, that a number of you should turn from your way to follow upon the tracks of a man and a maid? What have we to do with such, I say? Good indeed was it, that the *Izinyoka* should have been there to teach so many fools their duty. Now we must on."

'Then we heard the rattle of assegais and shields as once more the *impi* fell into rank, and soon the sound of their footsteps died into silence. We left our hiding-place cautiously, and as we went we

were very full of thankfulness to our *Izinyoka*, who had come in our path, and in the path of those who would have found us, and had saved us from destruction; and we debated as to the part our serpents had played, and we decided that the serpent of Nangeza, being that of prudence, was the one which had obliged us to retire from our first hiding-place, while the influence of my serpent, being that of the warrior, was the one which availed to drive back the searchers — as befitting the serpent of such a warrior as myself— and who may say that this was not so? At any rate, the joining together of our two *Izinyoka*, to protect us, struck us as a good omen for the future; for where should we have been had we remained in our first resting-place—where now, had not those who were searching been frightened back?

'But although we had so far escaped, yet were we in the greatest jeopardy. For the sun was nearly down, and how should we reach the camp, each by a roundabout way, before it grew dark? and how should we pass the King's outposts after? Nangeza might go in by herself, pleading some

excuse; but I—how was I to remain out? for even though the King should not require my attendance upon him—and on this I could not reckon—yet he who wanders abroad at night incurs peril from the staff of the "smeller-out," for we hold that *tagati* always takes place during the hours of darkness, and the man who loves to wander abroad at such times, what can he be seeking but means to practise the foul and evil spells of wizardry?

'Long before we reached the camp it grew quite dark, and now we did not separate, for I would not leave Nangeza; for multitudes of wild beasts accompanied our migration, because of the abundant feasts we provided them with almost daily—even the flesh of men—and already we could hear their roarings and snarlings in the darkness. Moreover, it might be easier for two to pass the outposts together, than to double the chances of failure by making two separate attempts.

'As we advanced, noiselessly, stealthily, in the gloom, we heard a low humming sound, which seemed to come from the earth. We stood for a moment holding our breath, for we knew that

sound. It was the voice of a man, singing, and he might have been twelve spear-lengths in front of us. We knew the ground also. We were in a little valley between two low hills. Probably on each of the latter was another sentinel. Nangeza threw her skin kaross over both our heads, and breathed forth her plan—for the plan was hers. I was for taking the risk of slipping past—she, for the bolder but safer method of overpowering the sentinel.

'Worming like serpents along the ground, we made our way up behind him bit by bit, and the time consumed must have been enormous, for we would not risk failure for the sake of impatience. But this fool surely courted his own undoing, for he sat there singing. Every time he stopped singing we stopped in our advance, but so fond was he of his own voice that he soon began again. Then Nangeza, creeping up behind him, flung her kaross over his head, at the same time throwing her arms around him and pinioning his tightly to his sides.

'The man struggled, but with the kaross over his head and in his mouth he could not cry out.

Still, he struggled, and it took us both all we could do to master him quickly. We could easily have killed him, but had decided it were better not to. At length, with the thong Nangeza had brought to tie the firewood we bound him hand and foot, having gagged him with his own *mútya*, and thus we left him.

'All this while we had spoken no word, lest our voices should be recognised by him; further, we had been careful to leave nothing which might lead to suspicion travelling our way. We were now safe within the outposts, and in the huge camp we could easily pass unnoticed. It was time to separate, and as we did so Nangeza said:

'"Farewell now, Untúswa. Have patience and courage. I shall see thee an *induna* yet."

'"That may be so," I answered rather gloomily, for now that the adventure was over all my foreboding and disappointment came back. "But we have only seen the first of this night's doings. The last may wear a very different sort of countenance."

'And thus we parted.

'Now, *Nkose*, a portion of my gloom came of the knowledge of what would happen to the sentinel whom we had overpowered. Death would be his lot as surely as though I had driven my spear through his heart. I had a mind to go back and loose him, but that would mean giving my life for his, and I was not tired of life just yet. Moreover, it would mean the sacrifice of Nangeza also, and it were better that one person should perish than that two should. Yet, being still young and soft of heart, I felt sad as I thought of the doomed sentinel.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FATE OF THE SENTINEL.

'When I told Nangeza that we had seen but the beginning of the night's doings, *Nkose*, I spoke no more than the truth. The sentinel whom we had overpowered was found towards morning just as we had left him—tied and gagged; yet not, for he had managed to roll over and over until he came near enough to another outpost, who was about to fling a spear through him, thinking it an enemy approaching in the darkness. Better, indeed, if he had.

'Now, if there was one thing upon which Umzilikazi was strict, one rule the punishment of violating which, in the very smallest degree, was certain and merciless, that was military discipline.

By such discipline the great King Tshaka had become great, and with him the Zulu people; and it Umzilikazi, the founder and first King of a new nation, was resolved to maintain at its highest. So when heralds went round at an early hour crying aloud that all must assemble before the King—*indunas* and fighting men, women and children, boys and old men who were past bearing arms; not one of whatever estate was to be absent on pain of death—when the people heard this, I say, many feared, but none were surprised. All thought there was to be a great "smelling out" of *abatagati*, and, indeed, it ended in such. Only I and Nangeza knew the principal reason of the assembly, and secretly we feared.

'*Whau!* it was a sight, that muster! The warriors, crouching behind their shields, formed two immense half-circles, and behind them the women and children, the cloud of fear lying heavy upon their faces. The *izinduna* sat in a group a little distance from the King's hut.

'It happened that I was appointed shield-bearer to the King, and this went far to remove my fears,

for had any suspicion attached to me, I should not have been the man told off to stand behind the Great Great One on such an occasion as this. As Umzilikazi came forth, I walking before him with the great white shield held aloft, two *izimbonga* ran before us in a crouching attitude shouting aloud the names of the Great Great One; and the rattle of assegai hafts was as the quiver of the forest trees in a gale as the great half-circles of warriors bent low, echoing in a mighty rolling voice the words of the *izimbonga:*

'"*Ho, Yisobantu! Indhlovu 'nkulu! Ho, Inyoka 'mninimandhla! Ho, Inkunzi 'mnyama! Ho, 'Nkulu-'nkulu!*"*

'The King seated himself upon a carved block of wood which was covered with a leopard's skin, I taking up my position behind him, holding the white shield. On either side were ranged the young men of the royal body-guard, fully armed. Then he gave orders that the defaulting sentinel should be brought before him.

* 'O Father of the People! Great Elephant! O All-Powerful Serpent! O Black Bull! O Great Great One!'

'In the midst of four warriors of his own regiment, unarmed, of course, but not bound, the man drew near. He was a young man, tall and strong, and a feeling of profound pity was in the hearts of all; for, fine warrior as he was, all knew he was doomed. His offence was one which the King could not pardon. He did obeisance, uttering one word, "Baba!"* But as he rose one look at his face, which, though sad, was full of the dignity of fearlessness, caused my heart to stand still—for I recognised my brother, Sekweni. I had doomed to death my own father's son. Then the Great Great One spoke:

'"When a soldier of the King is set to guard the safety of the King, he has eyes to see with and ears to hear with. He has weapons to fight with, and strength wherewith to use them. Yet all these are of no use to him, since, being in full possession of them all, the King's sentinel is found at his post tied up, and gagged, and useless as a wooden log."

'Umzilikazi paused a moment, looking the young

* 'Father!'

warrior full in the face with a bitter and scornful expression. Then, in that quiet and stinging tone which he adopted when in the most terrible of his moods, he went on:

'"When a soldier of the King allows himself to be turned into a log for one night, is it not meet that he should be turned into one for ever? Now a log has no eyes to see with and no ears to hear with; it has no hands, no arms, no legs."

'Then, *Nkose*, it seemed to me that I had come to the end of my life. Here was I obliged to stand by while my own father's son was put to a most hideous and disgraceful death, through my means, and keep silence. I was on the point of speaking, of proclaiming myself the offender, when, from my position behind the King, I caught sight of Nangeza standing among the women, so tall and stately and splendid, and the recollection that if I spoke the lives of two would be taken instead of the life of one came back to me. Nay, further, I remembered that though Nangeza and myself would certainly be adjudged to die the death, the King would not any the more on that account

spare the life of my brother, Sekweni, whose offence was an unpardonable one.

'"A sentinel who is surprised and overpowered at his post is clearly of no use at all," went on the King. "We do not keep anything that is of no use, not even a dog. What hast thou to say, son of Ntelani?"

'"This, O Black Elephant," answered my brother. "I was bewitched!"

'"Ha! that is not much of a story," said the King; "though a stout hide thong may bind about a man a powerful spell. Yet, tell thy tale."

'"The spell was a female spell, O King!" replied my brother. And then he went on to tell how his seizure and binding had been done by feminine hands. The forms of those who had thus made him captive were the forms of women, and most perfectly moulded women, he declared. Of this he had been assured during the struggle, and the spells they had woven round him had rendered him powerless. Was not this ample proof that he had been bewitched? since what living woman would undertake to overpower and bind one of the King's

sentinels? Wizardry of the most dreaded kind was at work here.

'Now, when I heard this, I trembled for Nangeza. Why would she stand forth thus, so prominent among the other women, in all the splendid vigour of her symmetrical frame? What if the King's eye should fall upon her? What if a new idea should arise in his mind?

'"Thy story seems to hang together well, Sekweni," said the King. "But this thong," holding up the one wherewith Sekweni had been bound, "savoureth rather more of mortal hands. It is such as would be used to place around the horns of cattle, or as women would tie up burdens with—or firewood."

'At these words, *Nkose*, my eyes well-nigh leaped from my head with fear. He who knew all things had spoken those words.

'"Here, too, is what was rent from a skin kaross," went on the Great Great One, holding up a small strip of spotted skin. "It is as a fragment of a woman's garment. So far thy tale holdeth, son of Ntelani."

'At this my eyes again sought Nangeza. But she did not meet my glance. There was the same half-amused and wholly fearless expression in her face. What a wonderful girl she was! I thought, my own fears vanishing as I saw how full of courage she was.

'"Now, confess, *umfane!*" said the King suddenly, speaking quickly and bending upon my brother a terrible frown. "Are not these all lies? Hast thou not been the author of thine own undoing, by having dealings with a woman while thou shouldest have been watching at thy post?"

'"No lies have I told, O Great Great One, in whose light we live," answered Sekweni steadily. "It is as I have said—I was bewitched."

'"Good," said the King. "Now will we get to the root of this. Come forth, ye snakes of the darkness!"

'At these words the doors of three of the huts opened, and there burst forth from them the whole company of the *izanusi*. They were smeared with blood and flapping with entrails, and with their charms of bird-claws and human bones, snakes'

skins and cow-tail tufts, rattling around them, came dancing and leaping before the King, whistling and howling, a most hideous company.

'"Behold this thong—this bit of skin," said Umzilikazi, holding up the articles. "Find the owner, ye ringed snakes! Find the owners!"

'The *izanusi* went howling round the circle as is their wont, and all hearts quailed. Not a man could tell but that a wizard rod should be turned his way; yet on this occasion it was the women who had the most cause to fear, for had not Sekweni declared that his captors wore female shape? All, however, as the witch-doctors ran howling before them, kept up a most doleful song, calling for the speedy finding and punishment of the witch. Still, the *izanusi* ran twice round the circle without naming anybody, and, indeed, I, among others, thought I knew the reason of this; for it happened that at the last "smelling-out" they had named one of the King's favourite fighting chiefs, which had so enraged Umzilikazi, whom it had put to so much difficulty in finding a pretext for sparing the denounced man's life, that he had

more than half vowed the death of the witch-doctors the next time they should accuse the wrong person. This, then, was the cause of their hesitation, the more so that they suspected the old Mosutu had been spared in order to supersede themselves.

'But now indeed I had cause to quake, for the *izanusi* had stopped, and with renewed vigour were howling and dancing in front of the group of women among whom Nangeza was the most prominent. I could see the faces of these women quivering with fear, but not so hers. She echoed the witch-finding song louder than any, seeming to fling it back defiantly into their faces.

'"We name——" they shrieked, flourishing their arms and rattles, and leaping high in the air. The rods were already extended.

'"We name——"

'"Hold!" cried the King. "Go no further. I have a new idea. Where is Masuka? Where is the old Mosutu?"

'"Here, lord," said the old man, coming from a hut close by.

'"Hast thou been making *múti* alone, Masuka?" said the King.

'"I require no *múti*, O Black Elephant. That may be needful to such as these."

'"I hear thee, Masuka. Look, now. Twice have these *izanusi* gone round the circle, and yet have named no one. Let them stand aside now, and go thou around it once; for I believe their *múti* is worn thin, and thy power without it is greater than theirs with it."

'"The King shall be satisfied," answered the Mosutu.

'Now, although he had been well treated and kept in abundance, the old man had affected no superiority over any of us, great or mean. He had worn only one or two "charms," and, indeed, there was little about him to denote his estate, unlike our own magicians, who were ever performing strange and mysterious rites. When the time came, he would say, then his power would be proved; meanwhile he was under no necessity to do anything to keep it from tottering. And this was the first time since the fire-making

that he had been called upon to exercise his power.

'Now, as he paced round the ring, with nothing in his hand but a short pointed stick, and no ornaments save three black wooden beads suspended to his neck and two gnu's tails on his left arm, I felt no fear, for he was aware that I, and not Gungana, had saved his life, and I knew he would do nothing to harm me. So I breathed freely and watched the proceedings.

'Unlike the others, Masuka, as he went round the circle, looked at nobody. With his head thrown back, he stared skyward, muttering the while in a strange language, and every now and then breaking into a short yelling chant. But when he returned before the King he had named no one.

'"Well, Father of the Fire-spirit?" said Umzilikazi. "Who is to die?"

'We saw that blank look come over the old man's face which had come upon it that other time when we thought him dead. It was as if his spirit had suddenly left his body. Then he fell over and lay on the ground, still, motionless as a stone.

'All gazed upon him with awe and dread, gazed upon him in a silence which was only broken by the deep breathing of the multitude. At length his lips were seen to move. Words came forth:

'"Who has bewitched the soldier of the King?"

'The voice was so strange and far-away and hollow that it seemed to come from the very depths of the earth. Moreover, the eyes of the old Mosutu were so turned inwards that nothing but the whites were visible at a time. As he proceeded with his questions and answers he would roll his eyeballs around in a manner that was dreadful to behold. It was as if they were quite loose in his head.

'"Who has bewitched the soldier of the King? Is it Nkaleni?"

'"It is not Nkaleni."

'"Is it Matupe?"

'"It is not Matupe."

'"Is it Nangeza?"

'At these words, *Nkose*, and the pause that followed them, I was so startled that I nearly let fall the shield upon the royal head-ring, which

would have meant my instant death. As it was, I found I was holding it in such wise as to allow the sun to scorch one of the King's ears; but Umzilikazi was, fortunately, so interested in the witch-finding that he failed to notice it. Then, to my relief, the answer came:

'"It is not Nangeza."

'In this way old Masuka ran through a number of names, and the terror upon the countenances of the women named, for they were all women, until the answer came, was something to witness. Then he changed the form of question.

'"Were there two in it?"

'"There were two in it."

'"Was it Shushungani?"

'Such an exclamation of amazement broke from all, for Masuka had named one of the royal wives. It gathered in intensity as, after a longer pause than before, the answer came:

'"Shushungani—Shushungani! It was Shushungani!"

'A wild shriek burst from the owner of the name, who was standing among the royal women.

'"He lies! he lies!" she screamed in her terror. "The stranger *isanusi* lies!"

'"Peace, woman!" thundered the King. "Proceed, Masuka.'

'Again followed a number of names, one at last being fixed upon as before. She, too, was of the royal household, though not of the King's wives, and was called Pangúlwe. With her the naming ceased, and for long the old man lay in death-like silence, nor would the King suffer a word or a sound to be uttered. Then suddenly Masuka returned to life, and, sitting up, looked wonderingly around, as a man waking from a dream who finds himself in a strange place.

'To us there was something especially terrible about this method of "smelling-out," the old man's spirit seeming to leave his body thus and to talk with those of the unseen air—so different to the hideous clangour and wild dancing wherewith our own *izanusi* were wont to proceed—and resulting as it did in the naming of two of the royal women, our awe and wonder was without bounds.

'At a sign from the King the two named were

brought forward. Shushungani was a tall, straight woman, very black, and with a sullen countenance and evil eyes. The other, Pangúlwe, was young and rather pretty. On the faces of both was a dreadful look of terror over their coming fate.

'"Is the King bewitched himself," cried the former wildly, "that this dog of a stranger dares lift his tongue against the royal House?"

'"It seems that tongues are often lifted *within* the royal House, Shushungani, and that too much. Even the royal House is not always free from *abatagati*," replied the King, with a sneer. "*Hambani gahle!** A peaceful night awaits you both. Take them hence. Stay, though. They are of the royal House. Let them die the death of the spear!"

'The despairing shrieks of the two women whom the executioners had seized to drag forth to the place of death were completely drowned in the great chorus of *bonga* that arose by reason of this act of mercy on the part of the King. For he had

* 'Go in peace,' the Zulu form of farewell to anybody leaving.

ordered them the nobler death of the assegai instead of having their brains clubbed out with knobsticks, as the usual method was.

'"Now that the witches have gone to sleep," said the King, "it seems right that the bewitched should join them; for in good truth a sentinel at his post should be proof even against the spells of witchcraft."

'"I welcome death at the King's word," said Sekweni, who knew he was doomed. "But I would first ask a favour of the Great Great One."

'"Speak on," said the King.

'"I would ask that I, too, may die the death of the spear—the death of a warrior, of a soldier of the King."

'"Ha! thou askest that form of death, son of Ntelani? Yet it is the more painful of the two."

'"It is the death of a man, O Black Elephant."

'"So be it," said Umzilikazi, making a sign to those who stood by for the purpose.

'Then my poor brother was made to sit down on the ground, and in this posture his left arm was drawn high above his head and held there, while a

thin-bladed assegai was inserted below his armpit and pressed slowly, slowly downward until it reached the heart. Not a word, not a groan, escaped him in his agony, and at length, with a gasp, he fell over dead.

'In truth, *Nkose*, my heart was sore; yet had I spoken I could not have saved Sekweni's life.

'"*Ou!* he died bravely," said the King, who had been narrowly watching my poor brother's face, but had failed to detect any sign of shrinking. "I love not to order the death of such. Yet he who sleeps while on outpost will surely sleep for ever, be he whom he may. Draw near, Masuka.

'"Thou art an *isanusi* indeed!" went on Umzilikazi, taking snuff. "Thou hast rid the people of two pestilent witches, whose spells have robbed me of one of my bravest fighters. Five cows shalt thou have, old man, to start thee as one of ourselves. Now go."

'And all the people shouted aloud in praise of the justice and generosity of the King.

'Now, it failed not to be whispered abroad that the naming of the two royal women was a pre-

concerted thing, else had even a witch-doctor not dared to name one of the royal House, and, indeed, I at the time believed it. But afterwards I knew it was not so, and that no word had passed, the real truth being that Masuka, since his instalment among us, had made himself all eyes and ears and no tongue. Thus he had divined that Umzilikazi desired not the naming of warriors at the witch-findings, and was displeased with his own *izanusi* for denouncing such; further, that the woman Shushungani was sharp-tongued and evil-tempered, while the other by her conduct had incurred suspicion, and the King would gladly be rid of them both. So he won great praise from the King for ridding him of these two, and the people felt grateful to him in that he had denounced no one else. As for myself, *Nkose*, I rejoiced greatly; for Shushungani hated me, and was ever talking into the King's ear against me.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PROPHECY OF MASUKA.

'AFTER this the King gave orders that we should break up camp and resume our march, and, *Nkose*, it was something to see this immense company of people moving onward thus, day after day, in order to found a new nation. *Impis* were thrown out to right and to left, to ensure that no enemy might take us unawares; for the arm of Tshaka was long, and we could not say for certain that we were beyond the reach of it even then. In front, too, was a strong *impi* despatched, and this I often accompanied. But we found no enemy, no one to strike, for the terror of our name had gone ahead of us, and when the tribes in our path saw the great herds of game fleeing past them, they cried:

'"*Ou!* the tread of the Great Elephant already rumbles on the earth. The hunting dogs of the Zulu draw near." And all fled in fear to the rocks and caves of the mountains. However, we seized what they had left, and laid waste their kraals and passed on, for we should have gained nothing by hunting these rats out of their holes.

'These enormous herds of game, too, kept us abundantly in food—eland and quagga and gnu, every species was there—so that we had little need to kill our own cattle. Besides, it afforded us much sport, and kept us active; for not always such harmless and timid game as buck did we seek. In those days, *Nkose*, we thought no more of slaying a lion with spears than you white people do of shooting it with a gun; and in hunting lions the King took an especial delight, and more than once have I seen Umzilikazi slay with his own spears, and all unaided, the largest and fiercest of lions. In this sport he would often have me to accompany him, and, indeed, on one occasion it would have gone hard with me, in my rashness and anxiety to show my valour under the very eyes of the Great

Great One. For I had been overthrown by the rush of a wounded and furious lion, and would certainly have been dead had not the King sprang to the beast's side and stabbed him to the heart with his own hand. Then he laughed, and again reproached me with my lack of judgment and due cautiousness. *Au!* but he was a King indeed!

'Nangeza the while was still in her father's hands, for Gungana, although he desired to possess the girl, was of a close-fisted nature, and would not offer sufficient *lobola*, saying that the condescension of an *induna* of the King in taking a girl whose father was of no especial rank should more than make up for the deficiency. But this her father stoutly refused to see; on the contrary, he maintained that a man of Gungana's rank ought to give more than one who was nobody at all. So the negotiations hung in the air, to my great satisfaction, although this might be short-lived, for at any moment either party might yield.

'We had not been together over-much, Nangeza and I, since the day which had ended so fatally for my brother, Sekweni. In truth, our narrow escape

then had rather frightened us; besides, we looked upon the sad outcome of it as a bad omen. Meanwhile, my permission to *tunga* seemed as far off as ever, and long before it came Nangeza might be out of my reach. There were plenty of other girls, certainly, but I was young then, *Nkose*, and a fool, and had not yet found out that one girl is just as soon tired of as another. But I have had sixteen wives since those days, and I have found it out now—*yeh-bo!* I have found it out now.

'"Carry out my plan, Untúswa," she said to me once, when we were able to speak for a few moments. "That is our only chance."

'"*Whau!* in good truth," I answered, "a madder scheme never yet was set forth."

'She shrugged her splendid shoulders, uttering a disdainful click.

'"If it is only to risk your life, son of Ntelani, do you not risk it daily in the King's service?"

'This was true. Still, I have ever observed that the man who risks his life in the ordinary way is prone to shrink and draw back when some entirely new and untrodden path of death opens

out before him. In my perplexity I bethought me of Masuka.

'The old *isanusi*, who was now high in the King's favour, occupied a hut by himself; for we were again in a temporary camp. It was said that he passed all his days making *múti*, for men rarely saw him, and when he did come abroad, he would creep about in a quiet, retiring way, as though he were the most harmless and inoffensive of our aged people. Of him, of course, our own *izanusi* were fiercely envious, and plotted darkly his undoing. Yet he enjoyed the King's favour, wherefore none dare lift hand or tongue against him.

'I found the old man seated outside his hut staring blankly into space. In front of him was a small bowl containing a black, sticky substance.

'"Greeting, Father of the Fire-spirit!" I said.

'"I have seen you, son of Ntelani," he answered.

'"Are you making *múti*, father?" I went on, with a glance at the stuff.

'He chuckled.

'"*Múti?* Do I need it, Untúswa? Yet if you would see what *múti* is, you shall. Enter."

'For a moment I feared, for we Zulus have a horror and repulsion of all that relates to charms and wizardry. To be alone with those dreadful eyes—Ha! I went into that hut a man; I might come out of it a baboon, a snake. Yet I it was who had said to the King, "I know not fear." Then I bent down and crept through the entrance hole, and when I got inside, lo! there was very little in it at all.

'Old Masuka sat down and took snuff, blinking the while at me with his black and snaky eyes. Then he said:

'"You Amazulu are brave as lions in the fight, Untúswa, but in all that pertains to magic you are nowhere. These *izanusi* of yours are more ignorant than children."

'"Their art is nothing beside yours, father. But tell me, you who are now one of us, do you never long for your own dwellings again, the rocks and the mountains? Do you not also feel a thirst for revenge upon those who have slain your kindred and despoiled your possessions?"

'The old man's eyes flashed forth a laugh, and he said:

'"You are young, Untúswa. When you have seen the world grow gray with age, as I have, it is little enough you will grieve over such things as loss of kindred and possessions. Ha! you will as likely grieve over the fall of a tree in the wind, the removal of pebbles by a flooded river. And now your heart is sore because of the girl Nangeza, upon whose account you have many times incurred the doom of those who break the laws of Tshaka."

'"*Hau!*" I exclaimed hurriedly and in alarm. "Speak low, my father, speak low! Even the whisper of such a thing cannot but work me harm, almost as much as though it were really so."

'"As though it were really so! That is well said, son of Ntelani," he replied, with a chuckle.

'I was very much confused, for this old wizard seemed to divine the deepest secrets of men's hearts. How knew he this thing? He had never seen me speak with Nangeza, had certainly never witnessed our meetings, and he talked with nobody.

The girls who had surprised us that day had, I knew, let fall no word.

'"I am sore at heart indeed, father," I answered. "My greatest desire seems impossible of accomplishment. Yet once you declared I should obtain it."

'"If you obtain it, son of Ntelani, it will be at the cost of passing through such unknown terrors as will turn your heart to water, of doing such deeds of peril and daring as no man surely ever did before. At this and at no other cost. Are you prepared to earn it at such a price?"

'"*Hau!* I fear nothing. I am a warrior of the Amazulu," I answered boastfully.

'Masuka eyed me strangely.

'"Of *máti* were we speaking just now, warrior of the Amazulu who knows not fear," he said. "Now see. Are you sufficiently devoid of fear to dare to look into the future?"

'Then, *Nkose*, I felt that I had spoken like a liar and a braggart. Even the burning of the old magician's spider-like eyes in the half-gloom of the hut caused me to quail. What would it be

when I should follow him into the dark mysteries as yet unveiled? But it was not in me to eat up my word.

'"I dare all things, father," I replied.

'Again he bent upon me that strange look, and, going over to the other side of the hut, began to uncover something, which looked like an earthen bowl. Over this he sat for some time, keeping up the while that strange humming incantation with which he had accompanied the witch-finding. In the utmost tension of excitement, my eyes well-nigh starting from my head, I sat and watched him.

'"Draw near, son of Ntelani," he said at last.

'I approached, and peered cautiously over his shoulder, for he had been seated with his back towards me. The thing before him was a bowl, even as I had thought—a large bowl made of baked clay such as we use for beer. In it was a strange liquid which shone and shimmered in the half-darkness of the hut. As I looked into this something moved, and then I cried out in amazement, for it was as if a man were looking through

"I approached, and peered cautiously over his shoulder."

the circle of his hands into a strange world beyond. There were towering cliffs and rugged, stone-strewn slopes, and up these slopes surged a dense swarm of dark beings like ants. Ha! they were men! Then it seemed that rolling clouds of dust went up, that the mountain seemed to crack and split, and all fell into space. My tongue was tied with wonder and awe. I could utter no word.

'"Look again, son of Ntelani," said old Masuka. "What dost thou see?"

'"Ha! I see rocks, the black mouth of a pit! Ha! I can see into it; my sight pierces its depths. It is peopled with living creatures, shadowy, shapeless, hideous; far, far down I see them. Ha! they mouth, they gnash their teeth; yet I cannot see their shapes. They seem to draw me down to them. I am going, sinking, falling. *Au!* I will look no more! *Umtagati*, release me, or I kill thee!"

'I found I had gripped the old man by the shoulder, and was nearly crushing the bones in my powerful grasp. My eyes were protruding from my head, and I was streaming with perspiration

over the horror of the sight. And well indeed may such wizardry turn men's minds. The whole spell of the old man's magic was upon me, and it seemed as if I were bound hand and foot.

'"Have you beheld enough, warrior of the Amazulu who knows not fear, who dares all things?" he said, dropping out the words slowly and as the cuts of assegais. "Yet behold one thing more."

'His tone stung me, brought me back to myself. Again I looked. A man stood among men, and an assegai was descending to his chest. There was a crowd of faces in the background, but who held the assegai I knew not. Then I looked at the man.

'"It is my brother, Sekweni!" I cried. "Ha! I will have no more of this! It is *tagati* indeed."

'"Thy brother Sekweni!" laughed the old man in a harsh, rattling voice—"thy brother Sekweni! Forget not that, Untúswa, forget not that, when the time comes." And again he broke into that weird, mirthless laugh which was enough to curdle a man's blood.

'So strong upon me was the effect of his magic, that on leaving Masuka's hut I seemed to shrink from the eyes of all whom I met. It seemed that all must proclaim me aloud as *Umtagati*, and I walked in fear. How I hated the old Mosutu for the spell he had put upon me! I would have slain him if I had dared. I would have caused him to be smelt out; but that I dared still less. Indeed, it is probable that I myself would pay the penalty, and not he. I had looked into strange and terrifying mysteries, and was ever consumed by a longing to look once more into them, and this together with a horror of and repugnance to doing so.

CHAPTER IX.

THE KRAAL, EKUPUMULENI.

'MANY moons had now waxed and waned, and at length we began to feel secure from all pursuit and danger at the hands of Tshaka, and of a truth the *impis* of the Great King would have found it a difficult matter to travel over the dreadful waste we had left behind us. For we had carried off all the cattle and destroyed the crops of such tribes as we had fallen in with, and that designedly, in order to delay and harass by scarcity of food a force so large as would of necessity be sent in pursuit of us. Now, moreover, we began to feel great, for our flocks and herds had become considerable, and many captives had we spared in order to tend these along the march.

'We had come to a fair land, well watered with flowing streams, and waving with sweet grass. Here the King ordered a large kraal to be built, which was done, and this great circle, in size as that of Nodwengu, stood fair and large upon these plains where surely never such a royal dwelling was seen before. The huts stood three deep within the ring-fences of mimosa, and the great open space in the centre served for mustering the warriors and holding dances and ceremonies of state. At the upper side was the *Isigodhlo*, or royal enclosure, partitioned off by palisades of finely woven grass, and containing the King's dwelling, together with the huts of the royal women and those of the *Izinceku*, or court attendants, of whom I was now one. It was a noble kraal, and we who had wandered those many moons a homeless people, looking upon our work with a shout of pride, named it "Ekupumuleni" —"the place of rest."

'At that time the jealousy wherewith I was regarded by many, including some of the *indunas*, grew apace, and by none was it shown more freely

than by my father, Ntelani, and the *induna* Gungana. These were not slow to whisper abroad that I, being so young a man and unringed, was not the one to hold such a position of trust as that of *inceku*, having free access at all times to the *Isigodhlo* or royal enclosure; for this office was usually held by middle-aged or elderly men, and wearing the ring. But if any of such talk reached the ears of the King, as, indeed, what did no? the gave no sign of being influenced thereby, for he kept me about him, showing me the same favour as before. So I troubled not overmuch about the ill-will of the *izinduna*, but made light of it; wherein, *Nkose*, I was the very first among fools.

'Another party was there who regarded me with even greater hostility, and this was that of the *izanusi;* for had I not been the means of bringing old Masuka among them to make their magic of no effect against his? So they plotted day and night to accuse me before the King, and procure my death and that of the old Mosutu. Yet were they fearful to do this, for Umzilikazi loved one stalwart and daring warrior more than a whole regiment of

izanusi, in whose powers he was in his heart at no time a great believer; wherefore I felt safe, and laughed to myself at the malice of both *izanusi* and *izinduna*.

'About two days' march from where we had planted our kraal there arose ranges of mountains rugged and steep, their summits crowned with straight cliffs, and their bases split up into rifts and chasms and great gloomy ravines. Here there dwelt a tribe, or tribes, men of which we had encountered during our scouting or hunting expeditions. They were men of short, broad stature, and seemed not altogether without valour, for although in the fewness of their numbers they would flee before our armed legions, yet when they found themselves among the towering crags of their rocky retreat, which they scaled with surprising agility and fearlessness, they would turn and hurl at us defiance and jeering insult. In aspect they were like the kindred of old Masuka, but shorter and broader, and many were armed with bows and arrows as well as with assegai and battle-axe. These the King was for leaving in

peace as long as they kept to their mountain retreat, for they seemed to possess but few cattle. But when we found any of them out upon the plain we would pursue them, at times killing some, for that land we considered as the hunting-ground of the King alone, and who were these dogs that they should kill game upon it?

'Soon there came a time, however, when the King's forbearance made them overbold, for a band of them dared to creep down from their mountain home, and at night, entering our cattle kraals, which were situated outside our great kraal, drove off quite a number of the King's oxen. Then, indeed, did these mad ones bring death upon themselves, for who shall smite the trunk of the Great Elephant with a wand and live to boast thereof? An *impi* was sent in pursuit, and, coming up with the robbers, slew many, and, indeed, not one would have escaped but that darkness came on, and thus a few slipped away. Yet those who were slain did not lie down and beg for mercy. They fought — oh yes, they fought, dying hard like trapped lions; moreover, their little arrows, being

tipped with a strong and subtle poison, caused the death of those who received so much as a scratch. Then Umzilikazi, enraged, ordered out a powerful *impi* to scour out the mountains and utterly destroy these vermin, that not one should be left on the face of the earth.

'Before this was done, however, our *izanusi* thought they saw their opportunity, and accordingly they came before the King, dancing and howling in all their array of "charms" and magic, and clamoured for the death of Masuka, declaring that these were his own people, and accusing him of having bewitched our warriors, for since such a tiny scratch caused by so contemptible a weapon as those little arrows produced death where a great spear-gash failed to prove fatal, it was clear that *tagati* was at work. Indeed, such a riot did they make, and so loud and persistent was their clamour, that Umzilikazi ordered the old Mosutu to stand forth and answer the charge. Now, this befell immediately upon our return from punishing the cattle-robbers, whom we had overtaken not half a day distant from our kraal.

'"These are not of my people, O King," said Masuka, "although they are akin to them. They are Baputi mixed with men of the Gqunaqua race, whose arrows thus deal death. But if I have bewitched the "hunting dogs" of the King, at least I can cure them. Can Isilwana do the like?"

'The man named, *Nkose*, was the chief of our *izanusi*. When he heard Masuka's words he howled the louder, for now he began to fear.

'"That is a fair answer," said the King—"a fair test, too. Let those wounded by the arrows be brought."

'Now, of those thus wounded but two remained alive, the remainder having died on the way. These two were soon brought before the King. Both were young men of my own age, both were in a state of stupor and breathing heavily. One was wounded in the shoulder, the other in the leg, but both wounds were mere scratches. The latter of these was selected by Masuka, who directed that he should be taken to his hut, and, ordering all others out, entered and shut himself up with the warrior

alone. Round the other wounded man our witch-doctors danced and howled. One produced from him a snake, another a lizard, another a hard pellet made of the hair of animals and the fibres of trees intertwined, but all to no purpose. The stupor of the young man grew heavier and heavier, and at length all could see that he was dead.

Then a deep silence fell, and the face of the King wore a look such as I would not have liked to see, beholding it through the eyes of Isilwana. And upon the silence could be heard the low humming incantation song, rising every now and again into a shrill chant, from Masuka's hut; and this lasted until the sun touched the distant mountains. Then the old Mosutu came forth.

'"What of the wounded man?' said the King; "does he live?"

'"He lives, Black Elephant," answered Masuka. "If he is left in my hut the night through with the King's guard over it, he shall walk forth in the morning to fight the battles of the Great Great One again."

'"Ha! that is well. And this one—does he live?"

'Now, all the *izanusi* cried out that he did, and that he would presently stand up alive and well. But we, who at a sign from the King had stepped forward, shouted that this was not so. The warrior was dead. His jaw had fallen, and his eyeballs, strained and sightless, stared blankly up to heaven. Then the King spoke:

'"It is clear that if witchcraft has been used it is not by Masuka, since his *múti* can restore life where that of Isilwana cannot. And since the *múti* of Isilwana is of no use, clearly Isilwana is an impostor and no *isanusi* at all. *Take him hence!*"

'So Isilwana was seized and dragged forth by the executioners, to find, beneath their knobsticks, the same death which he had been the cause of bringing upon others, and while the remainder of the *izanusi* lay on their faces groaning, in dread lest the same fate should overtake themselves, all the people loudly acclaimed the justice of the King. I, however, great as my faith in Masuka was, began to fear greatly lest his *múti* also should

prove unavailing, in which case the people would certainly cry for his death with such accord that Umzilikazi could hardly refuse compliance; in which event my own would seem within more measurable distance, for it seemed that my fate was linked and interwoven in some manner with his. Howbeit, that night we danced the war-dance and were doctored, and then, in the joy of anticipated battle, I lost sight of all fears; nor need I, indeed, have felt any, for on the morrow the wounded man walked forth alive and well, into the midst of those who had been sent by the King to guard Masuka's hut.

'We started before daylight, two thousand strong, for we had got tidings that the Baputi numbered more than we had at first thought, and that they had several caves and fortified strongholds which would require a large force and some hard fighting to overcome. But the insult offered to our King and nation was so great that, at all hazards, this pestilent tribe must be stamped off the face of the earth. A damp mist lay upon the land, and as we paraded before the King, we could

not see more than a few spear-lengths along the ranks. The roar of the *Bayéte* went up from every throat, and, wheeling, we marched down the great kraal, and filed out through the lower gate.

'Outside the kraal gates a company of girls had gathered, singing a martial song to encourage us to deeds of daring. They were divided into two ranks, and as we passed between, I caught the eye of Nangeza standing among the crowd, and it seemed as though she were singing to me alone. And as I looked, I saw that another was feasting his glance upon her, and that one was Gungana, the *induna* in command of the expedition. He was gazing upon her approvingly, and also with an air as though she were already his. The look seemed to say, "When I return, thy father shall be satisfied, Nangeza. He shall have the *lobola* he has named." This was what the look seemed to say, *Nkose*, and that as plain as words; and reading it thus, I said to myself as I gripped my weapons: "Ha, Gungana! not yet! A powerful *induna* has no more lives than an ordinary warrior, and the life of this one is between two deaths—that dealt

out by the King's enemies, and that by the King's soldier whose bravery thou hast stolen, and whose bride thou wouldst fain steal also. Be careful, Gungana, be careful!" Thus, with the fire of vengeance in my heart, I marched forth with the *impi*, and re-echoing in full chorus the fierce notes of the battle-song which the girls had led, we left Ekupumuleni far behind us, taking our way on and on into the enshrouding mist.

'All that day we marched, keeping as much as possible in bushy ravines and low-lying ground, the while throwing out scouts some distance on either side to cut off wandering Baputi who might convey tidings of our arrival to their people. Then at evening we saw the rugged and towering mountain-range against the sky in front. We halted awhile for a brief rest, then pushed on the night through, albeit we would have preferred more darkness to conceal our advance, for the moon was bright and nearly at half.

'Even in all our pride of war we felt some stirring of misgiving as we looked upon those great rock walls, grim and threatening in the moonlight,

and pierced with black fissures and caves, at those steep, rugged slopes strewn with stones and loose boulders. In such black and horrible holes, among the bats and baboons, did these *abatagati* dwell; and then we thought of the deadly little poison sticks coming at us in clouds from these dark dens, and our hearts were filled with rage and hatred against these miserable cowards, who would not fight fair, man to man and spear to spear, but met us with such unsoldierlike weapons as poisoned darts thrown from behind stones, and we vowed utterly to destroy, to the very last living thing, the whole of this evil and foul-dealing crew.

'Silently beneath the white light of the moon we swept up the deep, narrow defile which we knew led to the strongholds of these *abatagati*. It was a dark and ugly place. Huge red cliff walls on either side rose high up to heaven, leaning forward as though about to fall against each other, and as we entered further and further it seemed that we were penetrating the gloomy heart of the earth.

'Just before day broke we saw a cloud of dust some distance ahead of us, and now every heart

beat quicker, every eye brightened, every hand gripped weapon and shield. We were ordered to advance at a run, but even then it seemed we could get no nearer to that dust-cloud. But as the dawn fell we could see that it was caused by a large herd of cattle, which was being urged forward by a number of figures, which at that distance we could see were those of both men and women, also a few children.

'They were still a great way off, and, going uphill, could, accustomed as they were to mountains, travel every bit as fast as we could. Then they turned into another defile as gloomy and overhung as the first, and entering this, we came upon one of those we were pursuing.

'He was lying on the ground. As we leaped forward to make an end of him, we saw that others had spared us the trouble. He was still a living man, but his wrinkled carcase was bleeding from many wounds. He was a very old man, and could not keep up, so his kindred had speared him lest, falling into our hands, he should give information as to their position and resources. And this, in

fact, he was just able to do, pointing out where their stronghold lay, though we could not understand the tongue with which he spoke. So we killed him at once—which, indeed, saved him much pain, as he could never have lived, because of the wounds his own people had inflicted upon him—and went our way again.

'And now, a long distance in front of us, we could see those of whom we were in pursuit, urging on their cattle. A long, steep, rugged slope led up to the cliff-belted summit of the mountain, and the highest point of this slope they had nearly gained. Then we saw the files of cattle enter and disappear into what seemed the base of the cliff itself, and after them their drivers. Ha! This, then, was their stronghold, a cave or some such dark hole, whence we must dislodge them? At any rate, there they were in a trap. At whatever loss to ourselves, we would score them off the face of the earth. So we were commanded to march slowly, in order that we might arrive sufficiently fresh to swarm up that steep slope and carry the place by storm.

'Then, as we marched up that deep, narrow defile—a sea of fierce, eager faces and glittering spear-points and tufted shields—we raised the war-song of Umzilikazi:

"Yaingahlabi leyo'nkunzi!
Yai ukúfa!"

And the great overhanging cliff walls flung back from one to the other its booming thunder-notes in mighty echoes.

'When we arrived beneath their fastness, by order of Gungana one of our men called aloud that the Baputi should come down—they and their cattle, and their wives, and their children—and deliver themselves into the hand of the great King, the Mighty Elephant of the Amandebili, whose majesty they had offended, and this speedily, lest all be put to the assegai. But, just when we thought we had cried to deaf ears, one of them appeared suddenly and high above us, shouting in a dark and uncouth tongue which none of us could understand. But he accompanied his speech with laughter and the most insulting of actions, and this we could understand; wherefore, at the word

from Gungana, with a roar we surged up the slope.

'*Whau, Nkose!* How shall I tell what followed? We had reached the top of the slope, albeit somewhat breathless, and saw nothing before us but the cliff face. Then suddenly the mountain seemed to crack and totter, and there fell forward upon us with a sound as of thunder such huge masses of rock that we thought the whole cliff had come away upon us. *Hau!* that was a sight! Clouds of dust rose from the slope and towered aloft to the heavens as these immense rocks struck the ground and went tearing and crashing downward as though the earth were rent up by the roots; and then the wild, shrill yells of surprise and alarm which went up from our people as they rolled and flung themselves out of the way of the falling mountain—as we thought it! *Hau!* Many were crushed, powdered, lying there stamped flat into the earth as the rocks had passed over them; and I—I had escaped the same fate by no wider a space than the thickness of my shield.

'The way was clear for us now, for we saw before

us a great dark opening in the base of the cliff extending for some length. But before we could gain it there was a high ridge, as it were a rampart of rock, crowning the rounded spur in a semicircle. Roaring the war-shout, we were about to leap across this, when a loud call from our leaders peremptorily forbade us, and we paused in the very leap.

'Not all, though. Some in the wild impetuosity of their course had already sprung, and these were writhing below in the agony of death and wounds, writhing transfixed. For on the other side of this ridge lay a depressed hollow studded with bristling spear-points, standing upright from the ground.

'And now, as we stood there massed upon the ridge, assegais began to whiz among us, hurled from the dark mouth in the cliff in front; arrows, too, the dreaded little poison sticks, one scratch from which would kill a man. Yet here our broad shields stood us in good stead, and were soon quivering with spears and arrows, which but for them would have found a home in our bodies. But we stayed not there. Following our *indunas*,

we leapt along the ridge, making for each end thereof; and so fiercely was this done that Gungana and Kalipe, the second *induna* in command under him, both entered the cave at the head of their divisions at the same time. *Hau!* Then it was that the fight began. With a roar that seemed to split the heart of the very mountain itself we sprang at them. They could not stand against our furious charge and the weight of our numbers, yet as fast as we beat them down beneath our knobsticks and shields they would half rise, or, lying wounded unto death, would grip the legs of our warriors and overthrow them, driving their spears or poisoned arrows into their bodies, until we were veritably treading our way over piles and layers of the slain, both friend and foe. Still others would rise up in front of us just when we reckoned the last were reached. *Whau!* How they fought, those wizards who dwelt in caves! how they died! It seemed as though a warrior who had fought right hard before only began to fight after he had been beaten down, for then it was that, fierce and desperate, and in the throes of death, he

would grip and stab, and even tear with his teeth, those who were slaying him. *Hau!* I was mad that day! I was bleeding from wounds, but at this I laughed, even though they might be the poison wounds for which there is no cure. I struck till my heavy knobstick was painted with gore. I slashed with my broad *umkonto*, and it seemed that my arm was shivered beneath the blows that rained upon my great war-shield. Yet fought I no more bravely than many another.

'Further and further had we pressed them back into the cavern, until now we were fighting almost beyond the light of day, and still fresh warriors seemed to rise up to meet us, only to be borne back beneath the weight of our numbers, the fury of our blows. And, indeed, had more than twice our own numbers sprung suddenly upon us, we could not have fallen back had we wished, for the eagerness of those who pressed on behind. But where were their women, where their cattle?

'Stumbling, rolling, catching our footing again, choking with the dust and hot fœtid atmosphere, we beat them backward step by step, the now

black gloom ringing with a deafening and hideous clamour, the roar of our war-shout, the shrill, vengeful yells of the maddened Baputi, and the shrieks and groans of the wounded and dying. *Hau!* I saw flames, sparks! I bathed in a sea of fire, of blood! That was a fight! That was a fight!

'And then the gloom seemed to brighten, and we saw a glimmer of daylight in front. This came from above; and now we could see that the cavern branched out into several forks, some seeming to ascend into the light, others holding on straight into the blackest of gloom. And down these latter we heard the lowing of cattle, the shrill voices of women and of children.

'"Ha! Izinkomo!" shouted the bulk of our warriors, pouring after these in pursuit. But I, with several others, was so hard engaged with an extra fierce and resolute body of Baputi that we thought little of spoil either in cattle or women, in the delirious madness of hard fighting. We pressed this group step by step up one of these lightening tunnels, slaying and being slain, until at

length we gained the outer day; and here, poised high above the world, we continued the battle in the golden sunlight once more, on the flat-topped summit of the mountain. Then our enemies broke and fled, but flee as they would we followed them swift of foot, sheathing our spears in their backs as they ran, or in their breasts as they turned. One whom I had pursued till I could draw breath no longer ran straight to the brow of the cliff. *Au!* it was an awful and dizzy height, as though one were looking down from the heaven itself. I sprang after him roaring, my assegai—now wet and foul with blood—uplifted. He did not wait, though. He leaped forth into space, but in the very act of leaping from that dreadful brink he half turned and hurled his knobstick; and as I saw him leap the heavy knob met me in the forehead with a mighty crash. Then was whirling, roaring night, and after it silent darkness.

CHAPTER X.

'FAREWELL, GUNGANA!'

'To that night of dreamless sleep there came an awakening at last. The sun was pouring down upon my naked shoulders, and, wounded and exhausted as I was, it seemed that I had awakened in the fire. We had begun the fight at daybreak, but now, as I lifted my head and looked about, the sun was within an hour of his rest. A silence as of the dead reigned around, and from the lofty height where I lay I could see other mountain-tops, some flat like this one, others rent into jagged peaks, rolling around in a confused sea.

'A shadow swept between me and the sun, followed by another and another. I looked up. They were vultures. Then came a flap, flap of

wings as a number of them rose from the corpse of a slain Baputi upon which they had already been feeding. A little longer of sleep, of insensibility, and the horrible creatures would have begun upon me likewise!

'Then I rose to my feet. I was covered with blood, and stiff and sore. I ached all over from the blows I had received, but as I stretched my limbs I knew that not a bone was injured, although my bruises were many. But now—to get away from here.

'I looked around. There was no sign of life on the flat summit of the mountain. I looked over the brink of the cliff, which fell straight and sheer to a great depth. There was no sign of life beneath. Our *impi* would long since have departed, driving before it the spoils in cattle and women, and yet, as I looked down, I seemed not to be looking into the defile by which we had advanced. I, of course, would not be much missed. I should simply be reported as one of the slain.

'And now, as I took in thoroughly the situation,

I reckoned that I must have covered a long distance in pursuit of the flying Baputi; for I could not find the outlet by which I had emerged, though more than once I nearly fell headlong into a black fissure or hole which, well-nigh hidden in the long grass, yawned for the bodies of men. These pits, *Nkose*, were ugly to look upon, so straight and black did they go down. And the depth! *Whau!* I would drop a stone in and listen, but it seemed long before any sound was heard, and then so far down. Nor was that all; for again I would hear it farther down still, and yet again, till it was enough to chill a man's blood to listen, such was the depth of these black and horrible holes. And so many of them were there that the difficulty of finding the one by which I had come up would be very great.

'Yet this must be done, for by the flat formation of the mountain, and the height and straightness of the cliffs that belted it, I feared there was no way hence but that by which I had come; and could I even find this, now that the heat of battle was over, I relished not the task of creeping back

alone through that gruesome cavern in the darkness, treading over those stark and piled-up corpses both of our warriors and of our foes. *Hau!* that would be a feat of terror indeed. And then came back to me the visions I had beheld in the *múti* bowl of old Masuka, and I, who feared no man, nor any number of men coming against me with spear and shield, now trembled. For had not his magic so far proved true—the mountain, the dark crowd of men swarming like ants up the slope, the crash and splitting of the rock, the towering cloud of dust? *Ou!* it was terrible. The first vision had been fulfilled exactly as I had beheld it in the bowl. In the heat of the assault, the fierceness of the battle, I had lost sight of this; but now it came back with renewed force. As to the other visions also, my memory was strangely beclouded, yet that they too would befall I doubted not.

'Now, as I explored the summit of the mountain, I did so warily, and not showing myself over-much at the edge, for it might well be that some of our enemies had escaped and called together others of

the tribe, if others there were, and these, catching sight of me from beneath, might well waylay and kill me by whatever way I might manage to descend. Also I proceeded cautiously, with my broad-bladed, short-hafted assegai in my right hand and my large war-shield in readiness in my left, and thus was prepared for any enemy who might spring up, as it were, out of the ground. Yet, if I would find my way down that night, it must be quickly, for the sun was already touching the mountain-peaks opposite, causing the great ironstone cliff faces to glow like fire.

'Suddenly, rounding a large rock, I came upon a man—a tall man—armed. Up went his shield and assegai in readiness, even as did mine, as I stopped short. Then I saw he was one of ourselves.

'"Greeting, son of Ntelani," he said. "What do you here?"

'"Greeting, Gungana, *induna* of the King," I answered. "What do *you* here?"

'"*Au!*" he cried, springing up from the rock against which he had been leaning, his eyes flash-

ing with anger. "Is it in that tone thou talkest to me, thou jackal-whelp—to *me*, dog-cub?"

'"Spare me, father," I answered in mock fear, for I had a design in deceiving him, "spare me! My head has had a hard knock. It may be that."

'"In truth, thou speakest only just in time to save thy head from a far harder knock, *umfane*; for the knobsticks of the King's executioners come down hard upon the skulls of rebellious soldiers who disobey and insult their commanders."

'Now, *Nkose*, my blood boiled within me. The sneering "*umfane*" to me, who, although not ringed, was yet an *inceku*, was too much. Gungana should pay for that sneer. Moreover, self-preservation called out loudly within me. For nothing less than my death would satisfy this chief, the deadly import of whose words struck full upon my mind. A charge of mutiny and disobedience brought against me by a commander of Gungana's standing, the King, reproaching me as he often did with rashness and lack of judgment, could hardly discredit, and would certainly not pardon. It was

my death or that of Gungana. But I answered with deference:

'"How is it you are all alone here, my father? Have all men gonè away and left their chief?"

'"They have, but they shall mourn for it," he answered. "I followed those *abatagati* dogs up here alone, but so many and so perilous are the holes that I know not by which one of them we came up nor by which we shall go down."

'"By none of them shall *we* go down, my father," I shouted. "By none of them shall *we* go down, for one of us shall remain up here for ever!"

'"Truly that knock on the head was a hard one," he said. "The *umfane* has gone mad, quite mad!"

'"Not so, *induna* of the King," I answered. "It is your death or mine. Now—stand ready!"

'I could have rushed upon and killed him in his first surprise, *Nkose*, and this was my original intention, yet, much as I hated him, he was a brave man, and had led me to battle almost ever since I was able to fight. Nor, though I have

slain many, did I ever like to strike a man unprepared. Wherefore I called upon him to stand to his defence.

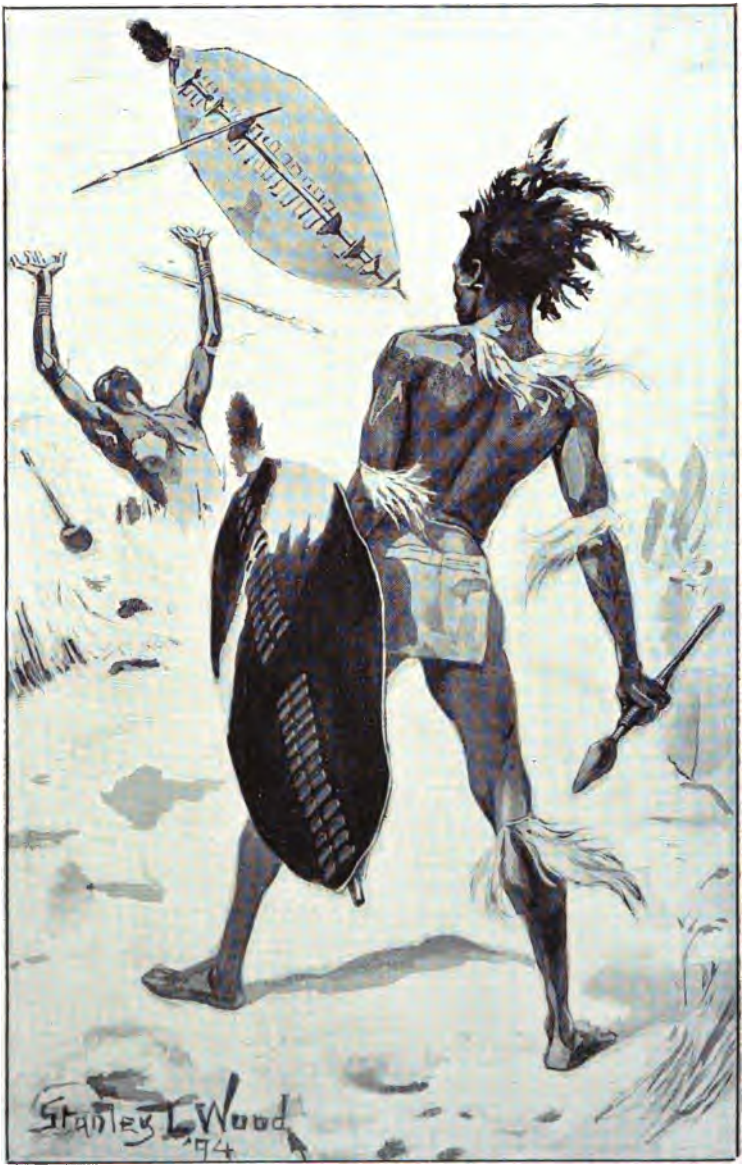
'I had not to call upon him twice. As soon as he saw that I meant my words, no time did he give me, for he came at me with his spear uplifted. But I caught it on my shield, and at the same time the stab which I aimed at him glanced off the surface of his. Not a moment did we thus remain together, for, withdrawing, we sprang at each other again. Still, each was so dexterous in the art of handling his shield that we could not hurt each other. Our chests heaved and panted, and our eyes glared, yet not a word did we speak, not a sound did we utter; in silence we fought, for this was a combat to the death.

'As we charged each other for the third time, I hurled my heavy knobstick with all my force at Gungana's forehead. But so quick was his eye that he just moved his head and the kerrie went whizzing away into the grass behind him. Then once more we closed. Ha, I was wounded! The keen flash of the blade ripped and seared my

shoulder like hot iron, but, regardless of risk, I now became impetuous, and struck down wildly over his guard. But this the chief easily parried, uttering a short contemptuous laugh, which angering me, I pressed him so hard that he began to fall back step by step, nor could he get in a fair stroke at me, so close put to it was he to defend himself from mine.

'And now it seemed that his age was beginning to go against him, for, skilful fighter as he was, Gungana was long past the flower of his youth, and in a protracted struggle my strength was bound to tell. Yet even then I know not how the matter might have ended but for what next befell.

'I had pressed him back further and further. He was on higher ground than myself. *Yau!* sometimes I see him now in my thoughts as he stood that evening, thrown out blackly against the heavens, which were flaming blood red where the sun had just sunk down. I myself had drawn back a few paces to make a feint before rushing in at him again, when suddenly he disappeared feet foremost as he stood, disappeared into the earth,



"Disappeared into the earth, flinging his shield and assegais wildly on high."

flinging his shield and assegais wildly on high as he clutched at the grass and roots in vain.

'I sprang to the spot warily, for I knew what had befallen. He had sunk into one of those chasms or fissures of which I have spoken as gaping half concealed by the grass. Kneeling at the brink, I peered in, and doing so I thought I could hear the sound of laboured breathing.

'"Are you alive, my father?" I called out. "Is the hole deep?"

'"I have not reached the bottom, Untúswa," he answered. "I am holding myself up where the chasm narrows. There are some bushes growing where we met. Go, cut some, that you may draw me out."

'But at this I laughed.

'"I am young, O my father—only an *umfane*, as you said just now—but I am not completely a fool. The knobsticks of the King's executioners come down hard upon the skulls of rebellious soldiers, O Gungana, *induna* of the King," I mocked.

'"I was but angry, Untúswa. Thou art young,

and hast fought right well. I will name thee to the King, and will 'point at' thee in the next *Tyay'igama* dance."

'"Not so, my father. It is Kalipe who will do that—Kalipe, who will now be in chief command of the King's troops; Kalipe, who does *not* try and rob one of the King's brave soldiers of more than half the praise due to him; Kalipe, who does *not* rob the soldier of the chance of obtaining his head-ring, who does *not lobola* for the girl that soldier wants. So now, Gungana, I will promote Kalipe to command the King's army—I, Untúswa the *inceku;* I, Untúswa the *umfane*—and I will do this *by making the post vacant.*"

'"Thou jackal whelp!" he snarled, disdaining further to ask for mercy, realizing, too, that it was useless, for he knew he had intended my death, and that I was fully aware he had. "Thou jackal whelp! I would that I had not spared thee all this while!"

'"It has been a day too long, my father," I jeered. "Now I shall go back, and the King will allow me to *tunga,* for he has promised it. I will

lobola for Nangeza, and soon I shall be an *induna*, and she shall be my 'great wife.' Then, O Gungana, I will not rest until I have all your sons and kindred 'smelt out' as *abatagati*, and 'eaten up.' Old Masuka will see to that; so you may soon expect them in the world of shades."

'*Whau, Nkose!* It was not well done, thus to mock and taunt a brave man and an *induna* of the King, being helpless. But I was young then, and I hated Gungana beyond describing. I thought of Nangeza, and how he would have robbed me of her; I thought of his continual designs to compass my ruin and death, and I knew there was not room in this world for him and myself together, and my heart became hard and ferocious as that of a wild beast.

'"Is it comfortable down there, *induna* of the King?" I jeered. "Ha! It is not much of a death for a warrior, for a brave commander of the King's armies, to die like an ant-bear in a dark hole. Oh no, it is not much of a death!"

'"Yet shalt thou die a worse one, O dog-whelp!" he answered. "A worse one—forget not that!"

'"Ha-ha!" I laughed. Then I arose and went a little way, and soon returned with some large stones. Bending over the hole, as soon as my eyes became accustomed to the blackness of its depths, I could just make out the shimmer of Gungana's head-ring some way down. I took the largest of the stones in both hands, and, poising it over this, I let it fall. There was a crunching sound, and a deep, convulsive groan; then the noise of a heavy body rolling and sliding further and further.

'"*Hlala gahle,** Gungana!" I shouted mockingly. "*Hlala gahle!*" Then I got up to go away.

'But as I rose from the spot, I did not feel glad. The sound of the stone as it struck Gungana's head, that quavering groan which shot upward into outer air, seemed to awaken other feelings within me but those of rejoicing. No, it was not well done, *Nkose*—yet it was to be my death or his. Still—it was not well done.

'Now the night drew on, and there was a rush

* 'Rest in peace.' Zulu form of farewell from a person going away.

of stars out into the blackness of the heavens, and I dared not move because of the holes and pitfalls which lay around. So I crouched down beneath the rock beside which I had first met Gungana, and shivered; for it was cold high up on that mountain-top, and my light war-adornments were of no use against the cold. Moreover, I was very hungry, having eaten nothing since before the attack—that is to say, before daybreak. Then a soft wind sprang up and wailed mournfully in the long grasses, and again I shivered, but not only with cold, for it seemed to me that the whole of that wild mountain-top was haunted—was peopled with the ghosts of those who had been slain that day, crying and whispering around me in the darkness; and ever and again I would hear the crunch of the stone upon Gungana's shaven skull, till I would fain stop my ears to shut out the sound; but that was of no use, because the sound was in my brain. And it seemed that Gungana's ghost had come up out of the earth, and was standing over me with hollow and blazing eyes, till at last I could bear it no longer, and rose up, resolved

to get away from that spot, at any rate. So I walked on cautiously, and singing softly to myself to drive away these evil shapes of the darkness, and, wearied as I was, I preferred movement, for it warmed me.

'But towards morning a thick mist sprang up, and now I knew no longer what direction I was taking. I snuffed the wind, but it was coming in fitful puffs equally from every direction. Fearing to walk over the cliff, I returned to retrace my steps, and then—— *Au!* that is a moment I can never forget, even now, old as I am. The ground failed beneath me, and I shot downwards feet foremost into the earth. For one sickening moment thus I fell, then stopped with a jerk. The stick of my shield, my hold of which I had not relaxed, had wedged somehow crosswise and arrested my fall; and there I hung suspended in this black chasm, even as Gungana had hung suspended.

'But the straight drop seemed to end here, for I could now feel the rock with my feet sloping obliquely down. However, it was all the same, for I could not climb up; I had fallen too far and the

sides were too straight for that. *Whau!* Gungana had spoken truly when he had predicted for me a worse death than his. For no merciful hand was there to crush in my skull with a stone from above, and so end my sufferings at once. No! I was destined to hours of horror down in my living tomb, holding on by a most frail support, to leave go when exhaustion should overpower me, and sink, buried alive, into the awful heart of the earth. Did ever living man feel as I felt, *Nkose*, as I clung there, realizing that never again was I to behold the light of day? Surely not.

'And then a most unutterably fearsome thing happened. Strange, uncouth whisperings seemed to sound beneath, rising upward from the blackness of the pit. Then something grasped me by the leg in a firm and bony grip. The stick of the shield gave way, and, with a last awful cry of wild terror and despair, I felt myself being dragged down—down!

CHAPTER XI.

THE EATERS OF MEN.

'In that short flash of time I must have died a thousand deaths. In my terror I made no attempt to arrest my downward course. Stones and dust rattled past my ears, flashes, as of sparks, in front of my brain; then I stopped.

'At first I hardly dared open my eyes, but, feeling the grip on my leg relax, I looked beneath, shuddering, fearful as to what my glance might rest upon—I who had boasted that I knew not fear.

'As my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, I made out little slanting rays of light penetrating from somewhere. I could see a vaulted rock wall above, around. But beneath?

'The black darkness of another pit, wherein voices were murmuring, shapes were moving. Ha! the vision of the wizard's *múti!* And as I looked, claws shot upward to seize me. All the old horror which had overwhelmed me in Masuka's hut came back to me now—the vision of the living creatures; shadowy, shapeless, hideous; mouthing and gnashing to draw me down. That frightful grip was again upon my legs, and, struggling, gasping, amid a cloud of dust and falling shingle, I was dragged down with a violent crash to the bottom of the pit.

'And now I could see I was beset by a number of the most grisly and horrible shapes the eyes of man ever beheld, for it was not quite dark in this evil hole. Frightful heads, with flattened skulls, and huge, champing jaws and horn-like ears, were wagging over me as I lay, and a bony claw put forth gripped me by the throat in the iron grip of strangulation, and with a growling, worrying snarl more than one pair of teeth seized me in different parts of the body.

'Then, desperate at the prospect of being torn in

pieces and devoured by these foul and loathsome creatures, with the very despair of terror I put forth all my strength, and whirling my knobstick, it met and crashed against what felt like a head. There was a most blood-chilling yell of wild dismay; then these hideous ghosts flung themselves from me and fled shrieking.

'As I leaped to my feet, shivering with the horror of this awful fate, my eyes becoming more accustomed to the darkness, I made out that I was in a great square chamber, on the floor of which lay several skulls.

'The odour which rose up from this was unspeakably fearful, and as the shafts of light came in stronger I could make out six or eight shapes—human shapes, I was going to say; but they were as the skeletons of baboons with dry bags of skin hung around them, and they had huge heads. They were huddled together on the opposite side of the hole, staring, pointing at me with their bony claws, moving to and fro their hideous heads, while whispering together in a hoarse and uncouth tongue of which I could gather not a word. Then,

while some still watched me, others bent down, and there was a sound as of tearing of meat, of cracking of bones; but what they had got before them I could not at first discern, for the ground was almost in darkness. But while I watched I heard a loud crack, and then two of them raised something from the ground—something large and heavy—each holding one end in his claws and teeth, tearing and growling like a beast. Then, *Nkose*, those unheard-of terrors predicted by the witch doctor were upon me; for the thing they held up and were thus devouring was the arm of a man, and I could see the fingers of the dead hand as though about to clutch their faces. What were these who haunted this gloomy hole of death? Were they indeed evil spirits, or were they *Izímu*, or man-eaters, such as in times past had been said to inhabit the country whence we had come out? Some, indeed, were said still to live there, hiding away in holes and caves; and such, you must know, *Nkose*, were held by us Zulus in the utmost detestation, as practising the vilest form of *tagati*.

'While I was thus gazing upon them in horror and disgust, one of the creatures, giving a frightful croak, as though to draw my attention, held up something towards me. It was against the light, and was round and shiny. I had not to look at it twice, for I knew it at a glance. It was a Zulu head-ring.

'But whence had it come? Had these vultures been hovering over the scene of the battle in order to drag away our brave dead to glut their own foul and loathsome carcases with? In my fury and loathing at the sight, I gripped my knobstick—for while falling I had not once lost hold of my weapons—and was about to spring upon them and batter out their miserable lives, when in the rapidly-increasing light I beheld that which caused me once more to sicken and all my blood to turn to ice. For in the torn and mangled body these carrion ghosts were devouring, the battered skull and swollen features, I recognised what had once been Gungana. This, then, was the very hole he had fallen into! What sort of omen was it that had caused me to fall into it likewise? In truth,

his prediction that my death should be a worse one than his had nearly been fulfilled, might even yet be fulfilled.

'Things looked plainer now. One unexpected meal had come down to these wizards through the pit into which we had both fallen. On hearing the noise of my descent, in their eagerness for that which should yield another, they must have climbed up to drag me down. *Au!* it was fearful, the thought of such a fate; and, lest fear should again overpower me, I resolved to act. So with a shout I leaped across the floor of the pit. It crackled with bones.

'Those *abatagati* did not rise; they sat there and screamed. *Au!* that was a scream—one to come back to a man in his sleep, and cause him to start up trembling! It rang through that frightful den as though to pierce the very rocks. Something was hurled at me, but I stepped aside, and it shivered against the rock behind. It was the skull of a man. Another flung a weighty object which struck me full in the chest, nearly overturning me. *Whau, Nkose!* Then was horror in-

deed! That which had so nearly overthrown me was a human leg freshly torn off, and was that of Gungana himself. What an omen, that the man whom I had killed should even in death continue to fight against me!

'Then in my fury I sprang at them, crashing their brains out with my heavy knobstick till I had killed several. The others threw themselves on the ground and screamed dismally. No attempt at resistance made they; indeed, it seemed as though they were hardly able to rise. And then through my rage it flashed upon me that, were I to slay them all, there would be none to reveal the way out; for a way out there must be, and that a secret one; for, save the hole by which I had fallen down, no passage of any kind was there to be seen. So, standing over the three that yet remained alive, I held aloft my great knobstick, all dripping with blood, and bade them show me the way forth.

'They screeched and chattered, not understanding a word I said. So I made signs by pointing to the hole I had dropped down by, and then making

as though I would walk through the rock. This they understood, and with much head-shaking and gesture pointed high above their heads. But all I could see there was solid rock.

'Yet—there was a crack; then two or three, letting in the light. It seemed to me, on looking long at this, that a flat, irregular hole was there stopped up by a slab of rock, and it was from the ground about twice the height of a tall man. Still, what could it mean? How could these miserable beings have entered by that—still more, how could they get out by it? More and more wonders were here.

'Not one word of their chattering could I understand. But at length, after trying all manner of signs, one of them seemed to convey to me two things—that they entered and went out by means of a thong, and that I must sit down and wait. Again I threatened them with death, but it was of no use. They could do no more than they had done—they still could only sign to me to wait and watch.

'*Au, Nkose!* Truly indeed did the old

Mosutu speak when he predicted that I should pass through horrors which the imagination of man could not invent. For as the long watches of that awful day went by, and I sat there in that darksome den lighted by a crevice here and there in the rocks, sat there among skulls and crackling bones, while opposite me cowered the three evil shapes of those hideous beings among the corpses —more hideous still—of their kind, while on the ground in front of them lay the mangled and torn remains of my own countryman, whom I myself had given over to this fate, then indeed it seemed as though I were one already dead and passed away.

'Sometimes I would sing to drive away the awful thoughts which were crowding upon me, but then the *Izímu* would sign wildly for me to desist, pointing above their heads to the supposed doorway. *Au!* I would not live through that day again—no, not to reign as King over the Amazulu or over the Amandebili for twice the life-time of a man. For that long day came to an end at last, and then, instead of the bright threads of sun-dart

through the crevices, there came grayness as though the shades of evening were falling. Think of it, *Nkose!* The day had been bad enough. But night, black rayless night, spent down there among these *abatagati*, among all the foul horrors of these *Izímu*—eaters of men!

'I had risen, and was preparing in my rage to slay those who were left, lest they should bind their magic around me and fall upon me in the darkness, and my fate should be even as that of Gungana, when I perceived them making quick signs to me to sit down, at the same time pointing to the stone overhead. Then I heard sounds above.

'With all the blood in my body tingling, I crouched in the shadow at the further end of the den, and sitting upon my shield to hide it, I fixed my eyes upon the stone which had been pointed out to me. I saw it move—move away with a rasping noise—and there was a hole wide enough to give passage to a man's body. Two or three heads appeared against this and were withdrawn, amid mutterings in an unknown tongue.

'I saw something drop down the rock till it reached the bottom of the den. It was a line. Immediately a man, passing himself backwards through the hole, slid down this. I, crouching in shadow, was unseen by him, and, gripping my weapons, I gathered myself for a spring, for I could see that deliverance was to be now or never, and resolved with all my might that it should be now.

'He dropped upon the rocky floor, and stood upright. He was entirely naked, and in build and feature very like the mountain tribe against whom we had been fighting. He was armed with an assegai and battle-axe, and as he stood there rolling his eyes around, I could see the three miserable wretches shivering and speechless with fear.

'He made one spring, and drove his assegai through the body of the foremost; then, not waiting till the wretch was dead, he knelt upon the still struggling carcase, and with the axe hacked off the head, flinging it with a laugh across the horrible hole. It bounded over the crackling bones, nearly striking me where I sat. Then, dragging the spouting

carcase to the line, he began to make fast the feet preparatory to the hauling of it up.

'Now, I began to see clearly where I was, and all manner of tales heard in childhood crowded back. Not these miserable beings, who were shut up in this place, were eaters of men—though probably they had been driven by hunger to devour the corpse of Gungana. Those who kept them there were the cannibals, and now I remembered wild and hideous legends of just such practices current among certain of the mountain tribes, and how their captives were shut up in caves or hollows and eaten one by one as they were required. I saw, too, how it was that the place was strewn with skulls. For some dark reason or other the heads were flung away here as I had seen this one flung. Those whom I had first found here were "cattle." It was the slaughter-house of the *Izimu*.

'As the man bent down to knot the feet of the corpse to the line, I stepped lightly up behind him, and with one swift blow of my heavy knobstick shattered his skull to atoms. Then, tying around

me the end of the line, which was of raw hide and strong, I signed to the two still alive that they should call to those above to draw up the line. This they did, being crafty enough to hope that my escape was to compass their own.

'Fortunately for me, the aperture was not large enough to admit the passage of more than one body at a time, wherefore, when my head rose above the surface, the only things I saw were the backs of eight or ten men who had hauled me to the surface by the simple plan of walking away with the other end of the thong! They must have thought that the slayer and the "ox" were being drawn up together, from the weight of it. How they were tugging and straining! *Au, Nkose!* you would have laughed aloud to have seen the scare on the faces of those men when they turned round to behold—not the dead carcase, their expected cannibal feast, but a big live Zulu warrior, fully armed with shield and weapons, charging upon them like lightning, roaring out the war-shout with all the power of his lungs! *Hau!* Did they run? Did they scream? *Hau!* I

saw nothing but their backs as they leaped away among the rocks in all directions, and, indeed, it is little to be wondered at if they did. And I, *Nkose*—having sufficiently frightened them, I did not linger either.

'When I emerged from the hole into the broad light of day—the shades of evening, rather, for it was growing dark—I saw that I was in a small rocky hollow, in the middle of which a fire was burning, doubtless for cooking the expected meal of the *Izímu*. But having given those who fled a sufficient fright, I lost no time in doing as they did, and fleeing myself. The growing darkness, too, was in my favour, and as I gained the outer ridge of the hollow, I saw beneath, a long rugged slope falling into the far depths of the defile up which our *impi* had marched the day before, and then my heart felt light again, and I began to sing softly to myself for joy, for now I could find my way back to Ekupumuleni. My enemy Gungana was cleared out of my path, I had fought well and bravely, and Kalipe, the war-chief who would succeed him, and who was kindly

disposed towards me, would "point at" me at the *Tyay'igama* dance. Then, after all I had gone through and my strange experiences, the face of the King would soften towards me, and I should obtain my heart's desire. And, as though it were a good omen, I almost stumbled over a young buck crouching on the mountain-side, to send an assegai through which was as a flash of time. But I dared not light a fire, lest scattered bands of enemies should still be lurking about; yet, as I was nearly starving, in any event I could not have waited. So I devoured great portions of the animal raw, as I walked, carrying the remainder with me. Then a great weariness came upon me, and, crawling into a hole among the rocks, I slept until the next sun was very high.

CHAPTER XII.

A WILD AND DESPERATE SCHEME.

'Not until I was clear of the mountains did I dare to travel during the light of day, for it seemed certain we had not entirely stamped out those *abatagati*. Now and then I could see them in small parties creeping warily about the mountain-side, and though I was well armed, yet I was but one man and they were many. So by day I lay in some safe hiding-place and rested, travelling only at night. *Whau!* but I liked it not. Those great mountain ranges seemed full of ghosts and the whispers of wizard voices in the darkness. But I had got rid of my enemy Gungana, who was ever striving to turn the King's ear against me, and it seemed that now things would go well. So I sang

softly to my guardian serpent as I stepped through that shadowy place, and my heart felt strong again.

'At length I came in sight of Ekupumuleni, lying fair and proud in its immense circle, and I loved the sight, for it spake to me of all that makes the life of a warrior glad—of our nation's greatness, of the mustering of *impis*, of the war dance and the beer-drinking, of our tales and songs round the fires on cold nights, of adventure and of love. I stretched out my hands to the kraal Ekupumuleni, and I cried aloud the praises of the Black Elephant who sat therein.

'As I drew near I met no one at first, for our herds were all feeding on the other side. Then I came upon a group of old *amakehla* who had just sat down to take snuff, and among them was my father, Ntelani, who, as I have said, loved me not overmuch. And when he saw me he cried out in astonishment, bringing his hand to his mouth and spilling the snuff from his spoon.

'"Ha, it is his ghost!" he said; "for was he not killed?"

'"No ghost is it, my father," I answered, sitting

down among them. "I was not killed, but lost myself in the pursuit. The calf of the cow has come home again."

'Then they questioned me, but I parried all their answers, telling them nothing, for I had determined to keep what I had seen for the ears of the King first, though I was not sure whether I ought not to bury it entirely, and place a flat stone upon it for ever, lest I opened a way to the *izanusi* at any time to lay a charge against me of having brought foul *múti* from among the *abatagati* of the mountains. But my reserve angered them, and my father said:

'"This calf bleats overloud. Perchance he will bleat still louder before long, but not with delight."

'I liked not his tone as he said this, and his look was one of malice. Immediately my heart felt heavy again, as though some evil awaited, so I bade them farewell and sped on to the kraal gates.

'Here I was hailed by many, for all thought of me as among the dead, several days having elapsed since the battle. But I spoke to none, pushing

past all until I reached the entrance to the *Isigodhlo*, and there I threw down my shield and weapons, and called loud to those who attended within that the calf had returned to the kraal after strange wanderings. This I was bound in duty to do, for Umzilikazi made a point of being immediately informed when anything occurred; indeed, no event was too trifling and insignificant to be unworthy of his notice, although nine times out of ten he would appear to know nothing about it.

'I had not long stood thus without the fence before I received a summons to enter. Umzilikazi was seated upon a lionskin in front of his house, and I thought he looked pleased as I drew near and shouted:

'"*Bayéte, 'Nkulu 'nkulu!* The calf has returned to the kraal of the Black Elephant."

'"Welcome, Untúswa!" said the King. "I had thought to find another chief-runner—another *inceku*."

'And then he bade me sit down and tell all that had befallen me.

'Now, *Nkose*, while I was beginning to tell my

story, I thought, and thought hard, and, as a consequence, I determined to make no mention whatever of Gungana. If I should narrate his loathsome end, always suppressing how he had got into the hole, there were not wanting those who would assert that I had brought about his death. Even the King himself might suspect it. Indeed, I would have avoided all mention of the slaughter-cave of the *Izímu*, but my serpent whispered to me that one day it might come about that some of these *abatagati* would be taken alive and brought before the King, and the whole story would come out. And then where would I be? Apart from the deadly crime of concealing aught from the King, should I not by my reticence have laid myself out to a charge of wizardry of the worst kind? So, except in the matter of Gungana, I told my story to the King, even as I have told it to you, *Nkose*. He listened with the deepest attention, but when I told how my appearance at the end of the line had scared the *Izímu*, who had expected to haul up dead meat, the King laughed as I never heard man laugh before or since.

'"*Whau!* That is a great tale!" he cried. "In truth, Untúswa, thy doings have been strange. But these Baputi—they fought well! Think you that the *Izímu* are of their tribe?"

'"That I know not, O Great Great One. They seemed to me of the same race."

'"Ha! I like not these wizards who hide behind rocks. I lose too many warriors for their wretched cattle and women, and their own miserable carcases slain. I have a mind to leave them in peace now."

'Thus the King talked on familiarly with me, as was his wont. At last he bade me depart. But I, noting his good-humour, and that he seemed glad to see me once more, reckoned the moment a favourable one, and renewed my request to be allowed to *tunga*. Immediately the countenance of the Great Great One grew stern and his speech changed.

'"What was the condition I named the first time you asked this, son of Ntelani?" he said. "What was my 'word' to you then?"

'"The 'word' of the King was: 'Perform some

act bolder than any act I have ever heard tell of,'" I answered. "Thus did the Great Great One speak."

'"Thus did I speak, Untúswa. And it seems to me that the condition has not yet been accomplished. Now go."

'I was of a different opinion, but not another word did I say. I cried out "*Bayéte!*" and left the King.

'Then those among whom I moved hailed me joyfully, and would have heard my story; but in truth I was ill inclined for mirth and chatter. I felt sore at heart and revengeful. Thrice had the King put me off, and who had fought his battles more bravely than I—who had slain more of his enemies in open fight? So I left my comrades, being minded to wander alone.

'"Greeting, son of Ntelani!"

'I turned quickly at the harsh, quavering croak. I was passing the hut of old Masuka. He it was who had hailed me.

'"Ha-ha!" he chuckled. "Do you desire to behold more *múti*, O traveller through the heart of the earth?"

'I answered him roughly, for he seemed but to mock me.

'"An *induna's* head-ring upon a floor of bones," he went on, speaking softly as though to himself. "The dead *within* the living."

'"*Hau!*" I cried, bringing my hand to my mouth and fairly leaping, so astounded was I. But the old man met my glance with ever so faint a grin as I stared wildly at him. This was too marvellous. What did not this terrible old wizard know? The grim secret of Gungana's end could not have been more exhaustively described.

'"What is not possible to thee, O my father!" I exclaimed. "Help me to gain my heart's desire, thou who didst promise that I should obtain it. For again has the King refused it."

'"What was the condition the King attached to the fulfilment of his promise, Untúswa?" he said, fixing his snake-like eyes upon my face.

'"That I should perform some act braver than any he had ever heard tell of."

'"Then—perform it. Perform such an act, son

of Ntelani;" and, laughing softly, Masuka turned and went into his hut.

'Angry that he should mock me, yet dreading his knowledge and power, I left him. Then, for solitude, I wandered out of the kraal, and unconsciously directed my way towards where the cattle were being herded—unconsciously, because in my then mood I had no desire to encounter Nangeza. Of what avail was it, since my head-ring was as far distant as ever?

'Soon I came upon one I recognised. This was Nangeza's little sister, Sitéle. But she was alone, and it seemed to me that on beholding me she wished to avoid speech with me, for she immediately began driving calves in a direction where it was not in the least necessary, or even desirable, they should go. So I called out to her, and she stopped.

'"Why are you alone, Sitéle?" I said. "Where is Nangeza?"

'"Can I see people at a distance?" was the answer. "She is not here."

'I could see her manner was full of confusion, and now I began to fear I knew not what.

'"Where is she, Sitéle?" I cried again.

'"*Au!* I know not. She dwells in my father's house no more."

'That was quick work! Who could have sent *lobola* and taken her away in those few days during which I had been absent?

'"Who has taken her, Sitéle? Gungana is dead."

'"There is a greater than Gungana."

'"Kalipe?" I cried, my thoughts flying to the King's favourite war-chief. "Is it Kalipe?"

'"There is a greater than Kalipe."

'"Ha! the King!"

'"She is in the *Isigodhlo*," said the child, fixing her eyes in fear upon my face. And well she might, for I forgot all control, and my eyes blazed furiously as I gripped my assegai and poured forth words which had any man heard, I should have seen not another sun to set. For I was mad. Not only had the King been making a mock of me all this time, but now he had put forth his hand and taken her upon whom my heart was set. I was young then, *Nkose*, and therefore a fool, and

did not reason as I should have done that there were other girls among the Amandebili as good as Nangeza.

'"*Hau!* Do we not all lie beneath the foot of the Elephant, and his tread is light!" I said, remembering myself. "Farewell, Sitéle. The Great Great One has chosen well."

'And I walked away.

'But although I thus spoke before the child, I was full of rage in my heart, and pondered over plans of deadly vengeance, wherein, of course, I was a fool, as an angry man ever is. And he who ponders vengeance against kings may well ponder also on the land of shadows and perpetual sleep, for into it must he soon assuredly fall.

'As this was borne in upon my mind, I threw off my recklessness, and went among my fellows and laughed and feasted. The *Tyay'igama* dance had been held before my return, so I missed that opportunity of making my deeds known in the sight of all men. Yet what mattered it, since the King still turned a deaf ear to my prayer, whatever brave acts I might perform? And no more

war expeditions were then sent forth, our time being passed in hunting game and exploring the country far and wide.

'At last I saw Nangeza. She was walking in a long file of other girls carrying bowls of the King's beer, for although he had taken her into the *Isigodhlo*, Umzilikazi had not yet taken her to wife, though he might at any moment do so. No speech dared I obtain with her, but she understood my glance, and it would be hard but that I would find some opportunity. And this at length occurred.

'She was hoeing a corn-patch bordered by thick bush which lay along the stream. It was the middle of the day, and there were few people about; wherefore I thought, "If I neglect to seize this opportunity when shall I find another?" So, while the other girls who were with her had their backs turned, I showed myself and beckoned her. She understood, and after I had waited some time, she joined me.

'She was hurried and rather frightened, which was not in the least surprising, for every moment

she passed with me she was risking her life. But I whispered to her the tale I had not told the King, namely, how I had slain Gungana in pursuance of the plot we had laid together previously. She looked at me, and her face was full of admiration, of awe at my daring.

'"You are indeed great, Untúswa, and dare all things," she said. But still she shook her head. Things were different now. The King had taken her.

'Then I reminded her of her prediction, that I should one day do great things, and that I meant to do them. Still she said that we had better speak with each other no more, lest we both lost our lives, for in a matter such as this the King would be merciless.

'"Attend now, Nangeza!" I said at last, when we had talked for as long as we dared. "I have served the King well, and he has requited me ill. Now I will bear it no longer. I will leave, and seek out some other tribe beyond the mountains or elsewhere, and of that tribe I will make myself chief. And you shall accompany me. So shall

the plan you proposed but a short while back find fulfilment."

'"Are you going to move the world, Untúswa?" she asked, laughing.

'"I will do great things," I answered. "How many tales have we among the people about men like myself who have made themselves into chiefs and kings! Well now, let us throw our lives into the venture, and strike a blow to be great or to fall in the attempt."

'"We are very much more likely to do the last, Untúswa," she said, laughing again.

'Now, when I looked at her I felt as though I would dare anything. She looked finer, handsomer than ever, and, being one of the King's girls, had begun to do her hair up into the reddened cone, such as our married women wear, and which corresponds to our head-ring. This added to her height, and as I stood there I vowed she looked every inch an *inkosikazi*, and swore that she should certainly be one, did she but trust herself to me. And, although she laughed and shook her head, I knew that the thought, once implanted in her mind,

would obtain firm root, for she was full of daring and ambition. Then we bade each other farewell.

'After this meeting with Nangeza all manner of wild and ambitious plans took possession of my mind. I pictured to myself strange tribes among whom I would arrive, and to whom my prowess and valour should ensure me a welcome. Then I would seize the chieftainship, and federate a great nation, even as Tshaka had done, and Nangeza should help me to rule it. Day and night this idea was before me—by day I thought on it, by night I dreamed of it. But I did more. I secreted by degrees stores of provision at intervals between Ekupumuleni and the mountains, and even well into the mountains, with which my former experiences had rendered me familiar. This I did, knowing that in our flight we could carry but little; nor was it done all at once, but took many days, for little indeed could I take away at a time, and suspicion was easily aroused.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN OUTLAWRY.

'JUST at this time there arrived chiefs and headmen, delegates from distant tribes, desiring to *konza** to Umzilikazi, for the terror of his name and the sound of our arms had gone forth far and wide. These were received in great state, several of our regiments being drawn up under arms, a sight which struck such awe into the envoys as to make them declare that, now their eyes had beheld the great King and had looked upon his might, they only desired to lie in his hand. The King accepted the cattle they had brought, and fixed the tribute they should from time to time pay in girls and cattle; also he ordered them to send contingents of

* Acknowledge as suzerain.

youths to Ekupumuleni, that he might inspect them and see if they were good enough to form into regiments, or only to be employed in menial labour. All this the chiefs promised to do, and in truth were they only too glad that they and theirs should be suffered to live, for they had long feared being swept off the face of the earth, stamped flat in the path of this warrior nation moving on towards them.

'But Umzilikazi was a wise and far-seeing ruler. Even as Tshaka had built up the Zulu power by federating kindred tribes into a whole, so did our King intend to consolidate a nation. These subject races would go towards augmenting his sway when their youth should be trained to arms as ours was. Indeed, I have heard it whispered that he even dreamed of one day pitting his forces against the mighty Tshaka himself, and reigning King over the whole Zulu race. So it was his policy to spare these chiefs and the tribes they represented, and to receive them as vassals.

'When these terms had been arranged, the King said:

'"It seems to me that some are wanting here, that the places of some who should be here are empty."

'The chiefs looked at each other. There was a tribe to the north, they said, which was not represented. As to it, however, they could say nothing, for they knew nothing, they declared, trembling in their hearts lest Umzilikazi should hold them responsible.

'"Attend, then," he replied. "Lose no time in sending to the chiefs of this tribe, that they come and talk with me here before the second moon is full. Failing that, I will send and talk with them." And his glance wandered meaningly to the armed regiments. The envoys promised that this should be done, but that if the tribe failed to send delegates it would not be their fault. Indeed, that people was a fighting race, and one with a good conceit of its own power. It might well be that in its blind ignorance it would refuse to hear the word of the Black Elephant who trumpeted at Ekupumuleni.

'"Then let them beware of the Elephant's

tread," answered the King shortly. And then he dismissed the envoys.

'Now, I, standing behind the Great Great One as his shield-bearer, was listening with large ears, and before the delegates departed I strove to have speech with them on the matter of that tribe, its numbers and powers, for it seemed to fit in with my purpose. What if I fled to it, and by my knowledge of the art of war gained a place and position among it? But these men, fearing a trap, spoke as with closed lips, and I learnt little.

'As time went by, certain of those tribes who had sent to *konza* to Umzilikazi neglected to fulfil the conditions laid upon them. So the King's "word" went out to them in the form of an *impi*, which fell upon them unawares and utterly destroyed them. None were spared save three of their chiefs and certain of the women who were young and well-favoured. For the rest, the ashes of their flaming kraals were soaked in their own blood. The three chiefs were brought to Ekupumuleni and there put to death by torture in the

sight of all the nation, that all men might know what it meant to break faith with the great King.

'This expedition I did not accompany, for it was composed of very young regiments and almost untried. But now and again, when I would meet or pass old Masuka, he would mutter: "Why do you not perform what the King requires, son of Ntelani? Where is the bravest act ever yet done?" And he would nod, and leer, and chuckle in such wise that in my anger I found myself wishing in my heart I had not saved his life.

'There was at this time another *inceku*, a ringed man named Njalo-njalo, and this man I hated, for he, suspecting something, used to declare that he would beg the King to give him Nangeza to wife. This he did in malice, for he, too, was jealous me as having the King's ear, and what made it worse was that I dared not chastise him, for that would be to betray myself completely. But I made up my mind that he should travel the way of Gungana, for the man who would meet with success must suffer no enemy to rest in his path.

So I laid numberless traps for him, but he was too crafty to walk into any one of them.

'At length I found Nangeza alone, even as before, at work in the cornfield, and this time she was accompanied by only two young girls who were almost children; and this made things easier, for she bade them continue their hoeing while she herself entered the bush to collect fire-sticks. Ha! then were we together again. The moment was ripe. I told her of all the preparations I had made for our flight, and for long had only been awaiting an opportunity. Such an opportunity had come. There were few if any people about. In a short time it would be dark, and by travelling all night we should soon reach the mountains, where we could easily elude pursuit. She listened, but even then I know not whether she would have consented were it not for an accident.

'Looking out from the cover of our hiding-place, we could see a good distance. The ground on the other side of the cornfield was a gradual slope sprinkled with stunted mimosa, and now something moving over this caught my eye. It was the

receding figure of a man, but what seemed strange was a certain stealthiness in his movements as he flitted from bush to bush as though anxious to avoid observation. Even at that distance I recognised Njalo-njalo.

'"*Hau!* we are dead already!" I cried. Not that I felt any real consternation, but I deemed it an excellent opportunity of obtaining through her fears that consent to my plan which fear had up till now withheld. "Do you see that man? It is Njalo-njalo. He has been watching us, and has gone to bring an armed force upon our heels. But we shall have a long start, and it will be a swift-travelling *impi* that will overtake us. Delay not," I went on, seeing her still hesitate. "To go back now is death, and worse. Remember the fate of the three chiefs."

'That decided her. She called out to the two girls to continue their work and wait for her—that she had not yet found what she wanted. Then she returned to me, and said: "I am ready." Thus we began our flight.

'Carefully keeping concealed—and the country

on that side was thickly wooded—we travelled rapidly for some distance. Then, as the sun was beginning to sink, we sat down to rest for a moment, and look around.

'We had now reached the top of a long hill of some little height. Looking back, we could see afar off the corn-patch where Nangeza had been working, and—we could see more: shields and the glitter of spear-points. An armed force was moving down the slope upon which I had descried Njalo-njalo, in the distance looking like a swarm of black ants. Already were we pursued.

'But we had a good start. As we rose immediately to continue our flight, I laughed aloud, for I felt as though I could keep on for ever. Not a man in our nation was there who could overtake me, the King's chief runner. But what of Nangeza? In her lay the weakness. For her I feared.

'Yet I need not have. Her powers were magnificent. I soon found that she had it in her to travel as fast as I could, and as far. And then we laughed together, for we would lead the King's messengers of death a long journey indeed. But

fast as we fled, still they pursued us; and as we sped onward in the darkness, we could ever and again, when we paused on some high ground to listen, hear the sounds of disturbed animal life behind us, which told of the passing of man.

'Suddenly a lion roared, so near in front of us that the thunders of his voice seemed to shake the ground, rolling in echoes among the hills. Another answered, and then the two mighty beasts kept up such a roaring chorus as to make a man's heart melt away for fear, situated as I was—as we were—the jaws of the ravening beasts before us in the darkness, the spears of the King's *impi* following on behind. There was just the chance that the latter would halt until it grew light, but none whatever that the lions would refrain from springing upon us, having us in the darkness for an easy prey. So we climbed each into a tree, to be beyond that peril, any way; and, indeed, hardly had we done so, than we heard the light tread and deep-toned snuffle of the great beasts ramping beneath. Then they lifted their voices and roared again,

and now others replied from afar, and it seemed that the whole land was filled with roaring lions.

'We remained all night in the trees, but with morning, lo! such a mist lay upon the earth that from where we crouched we could hardly see the ground beneath, and our hearts sank; for, not seeing our way, we might walk backward instead of forward, or we might run right upon the spears of those who pursued us. Yet we were not without some hope that the latter, doubting not but that we had been devoured by the lions, might return to the King and report accordingly.

'We were about to descend from our trees, thinking that the mist had lightened, when a sound fell upon our ears; and it was a sound there was no mistaking, for it is like nothing else that I know of—I mean the soft rattle of assegai hafts which a man carries bunched in his hand. *Hau!* We dared hardly so much as breathe. The sound drew nearer and nearer, and we could hear the rustling as of men forcing their way through bushes. Then we gave ourselves up for lost, as

they came immediately beneath, conversing in a low hum.

'"If the lions have eaten them, they will not have eaten their *mútyas*, nor Untúswa's shield and spears," a voice was saying. "These, at any rate, we must find."

'I recognised the voice as that of Njalo-njalo, and expected instant discovery. However, they seemed so intent on examining the spoors of the lions that their eyes were all upon the ground, and it never seemed to occur to them to look up; though, indeed, had they searched for us on such a plan in that forest country, their eyes would have been gazing upward all the time; and at length they passed on, yet little comfort did we take to ourselves, for in the mist we knew not which way to travel, whereas, did it lighten, we should be discovered to the messengers of death.

'We waited a little while longer, and then came down from our trees. Yet we decided not to follow on the line we had first intended to take, and which took us into that defile through which the *impi* had passed to attack the Baputi, because

those who sought us would be certain to make for that place first, reckoning that I would surely go there, where the land was already known to me. So we struck off nearly in the opposite direction to that taken by the pursuers, although this brought us back too near to Ekupumuleni. However, we saw them no more, and after three days — for travelling was slow and cautious, and at night we had to climb trees because of the lions—we got among the mountains.

'And now it seemed as though we had left the abodes of men, and were setting forth into an unknown land stretching away beyond the confines of the world; for here were great gloomy valleys and towering cliff-walls, resounding with the deep bark of the baboon and the scream of the eagle. But of man there was no sign. At night we would creep into some crevice or hole in the rocks, but it was seldom we dared make a fire, lest its light should be seen afar. Sometimes, however, we would find a deep cleft where the light would be screened by the rock in front, and then we would rejoice in the warmth while we roasted our game

at the comforting blaze, for the mountain-side abounded in several species of small buck, which I had no difficulty in obtaining at any time with assegai or knobstick. But there was other game more fierce, more formidable. Once, indeed, when we were about to take possession of such a cave for our night's quarters, we found it already tenanted by a fierce and growling leopard. We could see the brute's glittering eyes in the darkness as it retreated to the back of the hole and crouched there, uttering savage snarls; but that was all we could see of it, so we were fain to leave it in peace. Now and again, too, we would hear the roar of a lion hard by, but this was seldom, for there were few lions among the mountains. They preferred to hunt for their game in the lower country, where it was larger and better, and, indeed, our armies were wont to provide them with not a little prey.

CHAPTER XIV.

TO DOOM.

'For ten days longer we wandered through the mountains, and, in truth, it seemed that we were but getting deeper and deeper into them, for we knew not the way, and often our wanderings would bring us into a closed defile, which meant perhaps a whole day's journey thrown away, for we would have to retrace our steps. Still no sign did we see of the presence of man, no sign of that tribe which was waiting to hail me as chief.

'And now, as the days sped on, the gloom of the mountains, the iron solitude in which we moved, began to tell upon us. At first, with the excitement of our flight stirring our blood, we laughed, and sang, and loved, and were happy as children. But as the days went by we grew more

silent. We began to think of the life and cheeriness of Ekupumuleni, of our dances and fun, of our laughter from morning till night. I, too, thought of the fierce excitement of the war-dance, of the mad shock and joy of battle, of my comrades in arms whom I delighted to rival in the field, of the King, who had ever shown me favour, whom, in spite of my soreness and anger, I still loved with a loyal affection, and whom I had deserted—for the sake of a girl. Then my good spirit, as well as my evil one, cried out upon me for the chief of all fools. I had deserted my nation; I had renounced bearing arms in its behalf; I had become a wanderer and an outcast—never more to behold the face of my people, never more to converse with their tongue. I might have lived to become head *induna*, head fighting chief of our armies; and all this I had thrown away—for the sake of a girl.

'Then my heart would grow heavy and bitter as I went forth to hunt, leaving Nangeza in order that I might be alone with my heaviness. There were times when my heart so weighed me down that I was minded to return and pay forfeit with

my life, rather than drag it on in ignominy and exile; for now my eyes were opened, and I saw clearly that the man who should throw away his career as a warrior, and such dazzling chances as mine were—for the sake of a girl—is such a fool that he deserves not to live at all.

'Now, of all this, I said nothing to Nangeza; yet I could see that she divined in great measure my thoughts; nor was she pleased thereat — nor, indeed, did she more than slightly share them. For to a woman it matters not overmuch where she is, being devoid of mind; but to us—*au!* we may become fools, but we know it, *Nkose;* whereas the more a woman acts like a fool, the more will she cry aloud her wisdom.

'The nights became gloomy and wet and cold, and at times we would see gigantic spectres of men stalking aloft in the mists which overwreathed the cliff-brows; and strange wailing cries would go forth upon the night, as though the ghosts of those who had been slain and devoured by the *Izîmu* and such *abatagati* were wandering abroad; and we would cower over our fire and still more wish we were back at Ekupumuleni, for we seemed to have

got into the drear strongholds of wizardry, which would only end where the limits of the world fall off into dark space. But Nangeza would speak words of encouragement, how any day we might suddenly find ourselves looking down upon a fair and beauteous land beyond this region of gloom, even as we had done when we passed the Kwahlamba mountains to build up a new nation.

'One morning we were journeying, I with my shield and weapons in hand, Nangeza bearing the skin coverings and baskets we had made, for we had brought scarcely anything with us in our flight —thus were we journeying, when suddenly upon the mountain-side we came upon some people. There were perhaps thirty, and they, like ourselves, seemed to be moving from place to place, for the women were laden with household goods as well as with their infants. There were about twelve men with the party, and these, as soon as they saw us, stopped short and held their assegais and axes ready for defence. But I made signs to them that we were for peace, naming to them Masuka's name, and calling out such words of his language as Masuka had taught me. For I judged these people to be akin to him

in race, because in appearance they closely resembled the Baputi against whom we had fought. And it seemed to answer, for they turned to each other and talked very fast, but I could hear the names Masuka and Bapedi often repeated. Then, seeing that we were but two, and one of these a woman, they suffered us to draw near.

'These people were short, but broadly formed, especially as to the flanks. So short were they that Nangeza and I towered above them by the height of our heads, in many cases by even more. Their faces were ugly and wrinkled, and though shrewd, it was the craft and cunning of the monkey. That they were *Izímu* I had little doubt, so like were they to those I had seen in the cave, and for this reason I did not care to partake of their food, not knowing whether they might set before me the flesh of men. For they seemed desirous of treating us well, once we had made it clear that no *impi* followed on behind. Yet I bade Nangeza be on the alert, for their fair treatment might be a blind to cover the revenge they should take for their own people whom we had slain.

'So we journeyed with them, discoursing by

signs and such few words as Masuka had taught me, and at night we lay down together, but it was little I slept, fearing treachery, and the next day joined others of their people. These, seeing a big Zulu warrior, fully armed, marching towards them, were at first almost as frightened as those others when I had burst upon them from out of the cave. However, they were at length shown we were not enemies.

'The camp of these people was a round hollow under the cliffs, and, indeed, it was as foul and uncleanly as were their persons. *Au!* it was a horrible place! But we endured it, for we did not wish to arouse their hostility, and also we hoped they would show us some way out of the mountains. So we lay by their fires, yet, as before, not sleeping very soundly.

'"So this is the tribe of which I am to be chief!" I said grimly to Nangeza. "These are the people out of which we are to weld a nation!"

'"Not so," she answered. "We shall find others better than these."

'It was towards morning, when all is dark and cold, and slumber lieth heaviest upon the eyelids

of men. Even then it lay not heavy upon mine, although Nangeza, beside me, was slumbering deeply. But it seemed to me that somebody moved—stealthily moved. And then, in the dim light of dawn, I beheld the man who slept nearest to me roll over towards me, and roll over again—this time nearer. Then he raised his head, I through my eyelids watching him. Nearer still he crept, looked hard at me, and listened. But the sound of my breathing was regular. He was satisfied that I was fast asleep, and crawled back to where he first had lain.

'"Ha-ha!" laughed I to myself, gripping my broad spear beneath the skin blanket. "Now we shall see! Now we shall see!"

'I dared not waken Nangeza, lest, moving too suddenly, she should put these treacherous *abata-gati* on their guard; wherefore I lay still and watched. Then I saw the man who had first moved raise his arm, and in his hand was a long wand. With this he touched lightly the faces of five or six sleepers lying beyond him. They rose quickly, noiselessly, and in their hideous faces was the expression of a snake which is angry and

about to strike. Each held in his hand an assegai and a battle-axe.

'Then I sprang to my feet with a fearful roar. I whirled in among them while yet the terror of surprise was upon them, and cut down two, ripping them with my broad spear. Another I brained with my knobstick, but by that time the whole tribe was upon me shrieking. Assegais whizzed past my ears, one slightly wounding Nangeza, who, wakened suddenly, had sprung to my aid armed with a heavy knobstick of her own.

'"Come, Nangeza!" I cried. "They are too many. We must run!"

'So we plunged over the lip of the hollow, and side by side coursed down the steep slope without, the whole evil tribe howling upon our heels and flinging their long light-handled spears, too near us to be pleasant. But we soon distanced them, and reaching the bottom of the valley, where the thorn bushes grew thick, we slackened speed and, turning our heads back, jeered those who came on.

'"Ho, dogs!" I cried, "who are ye that think to outstrip the fastest of the King's runners?"

'"Who is running back to the King!" called

out a great voice behind. And starting round to deal with this new enemy, lo! we were surrounded by our own people, hemmed in by spear-points as by a thorn fence, each blade ready to enter our hearts. Our doom had overtaken us at last.

'"Drop thy weapons or die, son of Ntelani," said the leader of the *impi*. "The 'word' of the Great Great One was 'dead or alive'; if not alive, then dead."

'I glanced swiftly at the force surrounding us. It numbered about fifty men, all young, strong, determined warriors like myself. To resist would be to die. I looked at the leader, who was well known to me, and friendly. Then I said:

'"I will disarm, Ngubu. But first let me aid you in stamping out yon race of evil-doers. Then I will offer no resistance. This will be my last battle."

'"The King's orders did not say that, Untúswa. Nothing was in them about fighting," answered Ngubu; yet there was a longing look in his face as he glanced at the Baputi who had clustered on the ridge and were watching us, uncertain whether to stand or to fly.

'"And the girl?" he said, looking at Nangeza.

'"I will answer for her. You know my word stands, Ngubu, and not to save my own life will I sacrifice yours and those of all here to the wrath of the King. Come! Tarry no longer!"

'"I will trust you, Untúswa. *Whou!* but it will be a strange battle for you, and I fear it will indeed be thy last, for I think no man ever yet took away an inmate of the *Isigodhlo* and lived."

'"This cannot be!" cried another, running up. "The King's orders were to bring back these two. How, then, can you loosen them, perhaps to flee again, Ngubu?"

'"Peace, Njalo-njalo! I know Untúswa. Now —at them!"

'While we charged up the hill I made up my mind as to one thing, which was, that if this was to be my last battle, so also should it be Njalo-njalo's last. But the Baputi did not wait for us; they scattered and fled among the rocks, and although we spent half the day hunting them out and slaying all whom we found, the greater portion of them escaped; which enraged me, whom they had

treacherously tried to kill when a guest at their fires. In the eagerness of the pursuit I had distanced my own people, when I heard Njalo-njalo's voice crying:

'"After him! He is trying to escape!"

'I turned at this and ran straight back to where he stood amid a group of others.

'"Trying to escape, is he?" I roared. "Now, Njalo-njalo, come forth and meet me! Assuredly thou art well named—as to thy sleeping powers, that is—for to-day thou shalt sleep 'for ever and ever'*—but in death!"

'Most of them grinned at this, and Njalo-njal answered:

'"You are talking like a fool, boy! Why should I fight one whose life is forfeited to the King?"

'"Good! Then I will treat thee even as one of these miserable Baputi." And, quick as thought, before a hand could be lifted to prevent it, I hurled my great knobstick at his head. It struck him fair between the eyes, crashing with terrific force.

* Njalo-njalo means 'for ever and ever.'

Njalo-njalo dropped like an ox smitten by lightning. He never moved afterward:

'"He is a coward and deserved such an end!" I cried. "I am not, and my word stands. Take my weapons, men—I disarm." And I threw my assegais and shield on the ground beyond reach, and stood waiting.

'They surrounded me at once. Nangeza, who had been helping to kill the Baputi, stood by, also cool, brave, and fearless.

'"You have made more trouble by slaying Njalo-njalo," said Ngubu discontentedly. "*Whau*, Untúswa! It is on us the King's wrath will fall."

'"The King's wrath never yet fell upon anybody who slew a coward, for he loves not such," I answered. "And now, Ngubu, being unarmed, I need no bonds. I have done with hope. I care not to flee again into this region of wizards and ghosts."

'Herein I spoke the truth. So weighed down had my mind become by the gloom and the solitude, and being cut off from my kind, that I welcomed capture. So joyous a sound in my ears

"It struck him fair between the eyes."

was that of their voices, so cheering a sight to my eyes was that of my fellow-warriors in their fighting array, that I even looked with calmness upon the now near approach of my certain death; and thus walking in their midst as one of themselves, except that I was unarmed, I journeyed back to doom.

'Indeed, when after many days we got clear of the mountains and drew near to Ekupumuleni, my guards were even more sad of heart than myself as they thought upon my sure fate. But so glad was I to see the great kraal—"the resting-place," and, as regarded myself, too surely the last—once more, that it was like coming home; but it would be to me in a brief space a home of darkness and of night!

'A guard of women presently met us, accompanied by an *inceku*, bringing word from the King that Nangeza was to be handed over to them. So they led her away in their midst, and I knew we had looked upon each other's faces for the last time, unless perchance we should look upon them once more again at the place of doom.

CHAPTER XV.

THE KING'S SENTENCE.

'As we drew near Ekupumuleni we passed by the mound where the slayers were wont to do their work, and which rose at no long distance from the great kraal. I could see skulls glistening white among the grass on the mound, and I knew that in a very brief space my bones would lie there too, picked clean by the wild beasts of the waste. But even then I cannot say that I exactly feared. Too often had I gazed upon Death's face and laughed—for, indeed, to look for death was the daily portion of a warrior. Still, that was in the roar and excitement of battle, feeling an enemy sink down beneath each of my blows, while now—— It might be that the King in his wrath would order me, would

order us, a lingering death of torture. Well, still I was a warrior, and must die, in whatsoever manner death met me, strong, fearless to the last.

'As we entered the lower gate of the kraal, I, in the midst of my guards, unarmed, but unbound and free of limb, I began to hum a song—a song which came to me at the moment, a wild, elated song of battle and of death. My head was thrown back, my eyes looked straight in front of me while I sang, as though I were marching in the ranks of the *impi* to victory instead of to the evil-doer's doom. Those who guarded me stared and shrugged their shoulders.

'"*Hau!*" one of them cried. "He must be mad! The coming anger of the King, the Great Great One, has turned his brain."

'"Not so, Ncongula," I answered, for the speaker was well known to me. "I come of a House which knows how to die—whose brain the fear of death can never turn. I, Untúswa, the son of Ntelani, can walk forward to death, and sing the while."

'This was foolish talk and boasting, *Nkose*. Still, I believed it at the time, and it helped to keep my

heart from quailing; for it was a terrible thing I had done, and from its consequences there was no escape.

'The warriors were not mustered under arms, but there was an enormous crowd filling the whole of the great open space, so that it was with difficulty we could make our way through the densely-packed mass. But the peremptory summons of my guards to make way for the property of the King soon opened a lane in the midst. I threw side-glances upon the sea of faces hemming me in, and in most I read expressions of sorrow, especially among those of my own age, for although some of the older men regarded me with jealousy, I was well liked among my companions in arms; and the daring magnitude of my offence had struck them with admiration. Beyond the ring-fence in the background, where stood the huts, heads of women clustered thickly, and even they forgot to use their tongues in the intense excitement of the moment. All this I took in, so that it would remain stamped upon my brain as long as the power of thought should be left. Then I was standing before the

King, and raising my hand, I cried "*Bayéte!*" and bent low before him.

'Umzilikazi was seated at the upper end of the open space, a semicircle of *indunas* around him. Close beside him, however, squatted the old Mosutu witch-doctor, whose piercing, beady eyes met my glance with a most indescribable expression, the meaning of which I was utterly at a loss to read. I noticed, further, that Nangeza was not present; but this was only to be expected. When she had been led off by the guard of women, I never expected to behold her face again. Her doom would take place privately. It was only mine—as a necessary warning to those of my own age and standing—that would be pronounced and carried out in the sight of the nation. The great space, as I said, was crowded with dense masses of people; but, except a small body of armed warriors in attendance on the King, all carried sticks only.

'The King's eyes were fixed upon me, and in them I read no hope; indeed, not one spark of hope had kindled in my heart from the moment of our capture. Then Umzilikazi spoke:

'"Draw near, son of Ntelani! Welcome, son of Ntelani!" he said, speaking soft and pleasantly, but in that most terrible voice of all—even that mocking, bitter voice of his. "So thou art returned once more? The calf has again returned to the kraal? Welcome, wanderer!"

'"I lie beneath the foot of the Black Elephant," I answered.

'"Ha! But thou art an Elephant which is blacker still. Hail, Untúswa, builder up of a new nation! Hail, thou mightiest of all kings! Cry him the '*Bayéte*,' my children! Praise him, ye *izimbonga!* What! Have ye no titles for Untúswa, the would-be King—the great King of Nowhere?" And, as he looked from side to side, some of the old men mumbled out certain of the royal titles at me in mockery; but most of those present were silent, being filled with perplexity, perchance remembering that the humour of kings is like the blade of a spear, having two edges, and prone to cut both ways.

'Even as a spear, too, did the bitter derision of the King's voice cut. Then it flashed across me

that Nangeza must have been put to the torture and questioned, for how otherwise could my ambitious dreams and intentions have become known, since I had breathed no word of them to any other, not even to old Masuka?

'"Behold him, ye people!" went on the King. "Behold him, my shield-bearer, my *inceku*, my chief runner! The confidence which I placed in him as the first has moved him to try to be greater than I; his opportunities as the second he has used to rob the *Isigodhlo;* while his powers as the last have enabled him to flee fast and far. As a cow to her calf, so have I been to Untúswa, my *inceku*, yet he has run away to seek milk elsewhere, and that not alone. Well, Untúswa? And thy voice? Hast thou nothing to say?"

'"Nothing, O Great Great One," I answered, standing there alone, with the eyes of the whole nation upon me. "Nothing, for every word is the truth. Even now I walk upon the very edge of the darkness of death, and look forth into the blackness of its night. But let the double doom be mine, O Elephant whose tread rumbleth the

world, and spare the other, for I it was who beguiled her—bewitched her, if you will."

'At this bold admission a gasp escaped from all who heard it, and men put their hands to their mouths in wonder. But the band of *izanusi* who scowled hard by broke into mutterings. The eyes of old Masuka, however, began to glow with a strange and glittering light.

'"Ha! Fearest thou nothing, Untúswa?" said the King. "The death of the hot stones, the stake of impalement, the nest of the black ants?"

'"I fear but the frown of the King," I answered, although in truth a sweat broke out upon me at the mention of these terrible torments, but seldom used among us, and then only at the instigation of the *izanusi*. "But, Father, spare the other—spare Nangeza."

'If it were possible, I had thought I saw just such an expression pass across the King's face as sometimes dwelt there when he was especially pleased and good-humoured. But what mockery! As if such a thing could be!

'"Of the girl I will talk presently. But for

thyself, Untúswa—dost thou utter no word for thine own life?"

'"No word, Great Great One; for the doer of such a deed as I have done hath never yet failed to find death as his reward—never since our nation was a nation. I desire death no more than any other, yet do I not brave it day by day in the service of the King? To ask my life would be but a waste of words."

'"And thou, Ntelani! Hast thou no word for the life of thy son?"

'"No word, Great Great One," grunted my father, scowling savagely at me. "When my other son, Sekweni, earned death for his reward, did I seek to stay the justice of the King? I did not. Nor do I now. Let this one taste the reward he has won."

'Then there fell a silence—a silence that one could feel. Even the breathing of that immense crowd seemed hushed; the bent-forward attitude, the parted lips, the eyeballs protruding, betrayed the intensity of the moment. All this I saw in side-glances. In front sat the semicircle of

indunas, their faces set in hard, pitiless sternness. The countenance of the King as he sat gazing at me in silence was the only face whose owner was master of his own thoughts. The others were all carried away by the strain of the moment. For my part, I think my head turned slightly to and fro as though in a dream. I looked at the sun, whose setting I was not to see; I looked at the distant mountain ranges and the plains of earth, whose brightness I was destined to behold no more; and then the King spoke:

'"Even as thou sayest, Untúswa, son of Ntelani, thou hast done a deed the doer of which hath never yet failed to meet with the reward of death. The girl shall die. But for thee, Untúswa, by reason of the great service thou hast done our nation in the past, I grant thee thy life. But thy life only. For thou mayest no more be among my *izinceku;* no more shalt thou take thy place in the ranks of the warriors, or go out with them to battle, nor shalt thou ever be suffered to *tunga*. Thy place henceforth shall be among the lowest of the captured slaves who herd the nation's cattle,

bearing no arms but a stick only. Thus I give thee thy life."

'From a gasp which was first a lamentation as the multitude heard this dread sentence, there grew a great chorus of *bonga:*

'"Oh the just, the merciful One! How he pardons, how he spares! Is he not our Father!"

'Thus all men cried aloud by reason of the clemency of the King. Only I stood as I had stood, moving neither hand nor foot—silent.

'"Well, Untúswa, who art no more a warrior?" said the King, when the shouting had ceased. "Have I not given thee thy life? Look up. Thou wilt see the sun go down this night, thou wilt see it rise and go down many days, many nights. While all the people cry aloud in praise that I have given thee thy life, thou alone remainest mute."

'"Because I would prefer death, O Black Elephant!" I answered, raising my head. And then the tears rained from my eyes, even as from those of a child who is hurt. Yes, *Nkose*, I, Untúswa, the warrior who feared nothing, and who, when the King's enemies lay in front of us,

suffered no man to come between me and them, I, Untúswa, wept in the sight of the whole nation because of the dread sentence pronounced upon me by the King. For only think what it meant! I, a warrior, who lived but for battle, never again to bear arms! I, in the full flush and strength of my vigorous manhood, never to be allowed to wear the ring; I, an *inceku*, to descend to herd with the offscourings of all the miserable and degraded tribes we had swept from our path! Of course, I preferred death ten times over; the death of the hot stones, of the stake of impalement, of the black ants; any death, however hideous, however lingering, to life upon the terms of such awful degradation."

'"So thou askest for death, son of Ntelani?" said the King.

'"I pray for it, O Great Great One."

'"Ha! I should have been surprised hadst thou not prayed for it. Well, thou shalt have thy wish."

'And now, *Nkose*, I know not how it was, but as Umzilikazi pronounced these words my eyes once more met those of the old Mosutu witch-doctor.

They were burning with a strange glitter of intensity. His body was bent half forward in an attitude of anxiety such as I had never beheld in him, even when his own fate hung in the balance. But as I gazed into those burning orbs, something in them brought back the moment when I had dragged old Masuka from beneath the heaps of slain, and when he had pleaded for his life half defiantly while uttering his marvellous divination.

'The slayers advanced a few steps, then halted, and stood watching for a word, a sign, from the King. Then I lifted my voice, and cried:

'"The Black Elephant is good. I asked a boon, and, lo! it was granted. The Great Serpent is merciful. But now I make a claim. I claim the fulfilment of the King's promise!"

'The start, the stare, the quick murmur of astonishment which met these words, from all hearers, is hardly to be told. Even the Great Great One showed surprise. But in old Masuka's glittering eyes there was now another look. It was the look of one who has attained his object—of one who triumphs.

'"The King's promise, the 'word' of the Great Great One, in whose light we live!" I cried. "The King's 'word' stands, for I have fulfilled its conditions."

'I saw Umzilikazi start ever so slightly.

'"How so, Untúswa?" he said. "Explain."

'"Thus, O Elephant. The words of the King were: 'Perform some act, O son of Ntelani; perform some act bolder than any act I have ever yet heard tell of, and you shall be allowed to *tunga*. Not only that, but I will give you this broad *umkonto* which I hold in my hand.' Such was the 'word' of the Great Great One."

'"Yes, that is no lie, Untúswa," said the King softly, while all held their breath for his reply. "Yet I know not so far what thou hast done to claim the fulfilment of such a promise."

'"*Whau!*" I cried, bringing my hand to my mouth. "I would ask the King, the father of the wise, what bolder thing a man, being young, could do, than to steal one of the King's girls from the *Isigodhlo* in broad daylight, and depart with her alone in search of unknown tribes, to reign over a

new nation? What bolder act was ever performed, O Black Elephant?"

'"He is mad!—quite mad!" burst from the *indunas*. But the King smiled, and a new and strange look came into his face, yet from it I augured nothing. "I think thou hast done even a bolder thing, son of Ntelani," he said, "and that is to claim the fulfilment of my promise on such a ground. Surely no bolder act was ever heard tell of."

'And now men found speech and cried aloud in praise of the wisdom of the King—of the truth of his words. Then he went on:

'"My promise shall be kept," he said slowly, but with a dark and terrible meaning; "the latter part of it first. Thou shalt have this broad *umkonto*," twirling the great assegai in his hand till it flashed—a band of fire. "Oh yes, Untúswa! the 'word' of the King stands. Thou shalt have what I promised thee. Prepare, then, to receive thy reward."

'Then, in my joy, I shouted out the praises of the King, who had changed the doom of eternal

degradation he had pronounced upon me to that of death. But a grand and noble death would be mine, that of the spear; yet not that only, for I was to die by the spear of the King—to die by the King's own hand, for none other might wield the royal weapon for such a purpose. Yet, while I praised, no *bonga* arose from the multitude. All voices were hushed in expectation.

'Umzilikazi rose and advanced towards me. As he stood facing me, with the bright and gleaming spear uplifted, I looked him straight in the eyes—alone and about to taste death. And then it seemed that this situation was familiar to me—a man standing among men and an assegai descending to his chest. Ha! the third vision of the wizard's *múti!* Then I knew not—now I knew who held the spear. Still, I flinched not, though the eyes of the King were terrible in their wrath. "Take the reward I promised thee!" he said.

'"I welcome death at the hand of the King, the Great Great One!" I answered, gazing at the uplifted spear.

'Down it swept—down like a flash of light—

"Down it swept—down like a flash of light."

down to my breast which was thrust forward to receive it. But it did not enter. It halted—motionless but for a slight quiver—within a hand's-breadth of my heart. Still, my eyes left not those of the King, and for a moment thus we stood. Then Umzilikazi spoke:

'"Once more I grant thee thy life, Untúswa, son of Ntelani, for I think thou art the bravest warrior that ever lived, and fearest death in its cold form no more than in the heat and shock of battle. And I love such. Yet, but for my promise, thou wert already dead. The King's assegai is thine. Take it."

'Then it was that my self-command was sorely tried. I was not to die, but to receive honour, for I held in my hand the King's royal weapon. But my mind had gone through so much that it was hardened—cool and cutting even as the blade of the splendid spear; wherefore I laid the weapon softly down, for I might not address the King armed; and raising both hands aloft, I poured forth words of *bonga*, such as had surely never been heard before. And the whole nation joined in, and, indeed, even

in the far mountains the foul *Izímu* and such *abatagati* must have quaked in their dens, for even thither must have reached the vast roaring chorus of the praises of the King.

'"It is well, my children," said Umzilikazi when he again spoke. "Never before has such a deed met with other reward than death, never shall it again; and here my 'word' will stand as fast as it did in my promise to Untúswa. And thou, son of Ntelani. Go now forth from among us until the moon is full, and speak to no man the while, and the man or woman who speaks to thee shall die. Then it may be that what thou hast done shall be put away. Depart, for he who has done what thou hast done must not mix with his fellows for awhile, lest they make too light of a most weighty matter. Go."

'So singing aloud the praises of the King, I took up the dark-handled spear and went forth, and built a hut within sight of Ekupumuleni, and in that hut I dwelt alone; yet daily I would stand before it and chant in praise of the King, and all who heard me turned aside. Also I sang many songs of

battle. And when the moon was at the full the Great Great One sent for me and ordered me to *tunga*, and soon afterwards created me second *induna* in command of the army, Kalipe holding the chief command. Thus, *Nkose*, did I win the King's dark-handled spear, and my head-ring at the same time, but the path by which I travelled to reach it would have surely been, but for the King's promise, the path of death.'

EPILOGUE.

'WELL, Untúswa, I believe now, at any rate, that all the gold this waggon could carry would not purchase that assegai from you,' I said, as soon as the old man had finished. 'But what of Nangeza? Was she put to death?'

'She was not. The King pardoned her, too; and when I put on the head-ring he gave her to me to wife.'

'And did she make a good *Inkosikazi?*'

'*Wou!*' and the old man brought his hand to his mouth, while his rugged face lighted up with sly un. 'I had better have placed my head beneath

the paw of the lion for some other girl. Nangeza wanted to be chief and chieftainess, too. That would not do. We Zulus never allow our wives to be chiefs over us.'

'What became of her?' I said.

But he looked at me a moment, and the mirth dancing in his eyes changed to a flash of satire as he only repeated:

'We Zulus never allow our wives to be chiefs over us, *Nkose*.'

Then he took snuff.

'And what became of the old Mosutu witch-doctor?' I said, judiciously allowing the fate of Nangeza to remain shrouded in mystery.

'Masuka? Ha! After I was allowed to *tunga* he came to me and declared that I must give him cattle, for his was the *múti* which made me great; and, indeed, he told no lie there, for as far as a man's thoughts can speak, while his tongue must keep silence, old Masuka's thoughts spoke to me through his eyes that day that I should remind the King of his promise. So I gave him cattle, and from time to time more, for it was a great day for

me, that whereon I had saved his life; and the King favoured him, and the old Mosutu lived to a great age and died peacefully.'

'And why did you leave the Amandebili, Untúswa?' I said.

'The man who is high in favour with one King is not always high in favour with him who reigns next, nor with those who sit at his right hand,' he answered. 'Umzilikazi has long been dead. Then I heard that a great and merciful King sat in Zululand in the seat of Tshaka. So I returned to *konza* to Cetywayo, who received me well; nor was I too old to strike a blow for him, for I was enrolled in the Undi regiment, and fought against you English *Kwa Jim*,* and again at Kambúla. Yes, after all my wanderings, I returned to die in Zululand. And now, *Nkose*, the sun is getting low, and I have some distance to travel, wherefore I must be gone.'

The like held good as regarded myself. The heat of the day was over, and my 'boys,' who all this time had been asleep beneath the waggon,

* At Rorke's Drift.

were waking up and preparing to inspan for the evening trek. So I loaded up Untúswa with sundry unconsidered trifles, but very precious in Zulu eyes at that time. He was loud in his thanks.

'The story I have told, *Nkose*, is but that of a small portion of my own life—of a small portion of the earlier wanderings of the Amandebili. Afterwards, how we met and fought the Boers and other peoples—*au!* that would take long in telling. But if you are in this part again before leaving the Zulu country, it may be that we shall meet, and other strange tales and wonders I shall relate.'

And, uttering a sonorous farewell, the fine old warrior turned, and soon his tall, straight form was out of sight.

Such was the story of the King's Assegai, as told by Untúswa, the son of Ntelani, and as an episode in the early stages of the Amandebili migration it seems worthy of being retold.

THE END.

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